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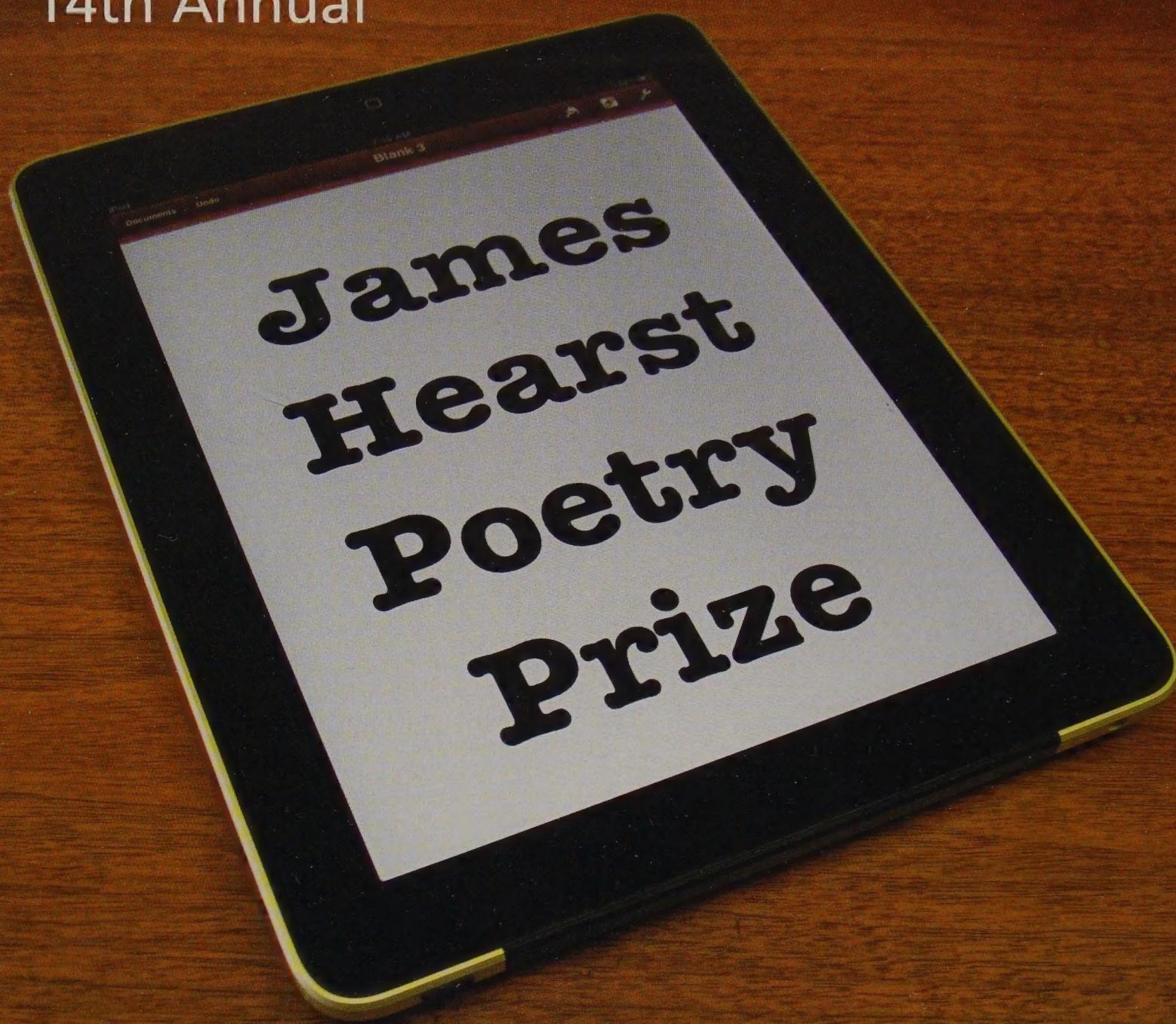
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SPRING 2013

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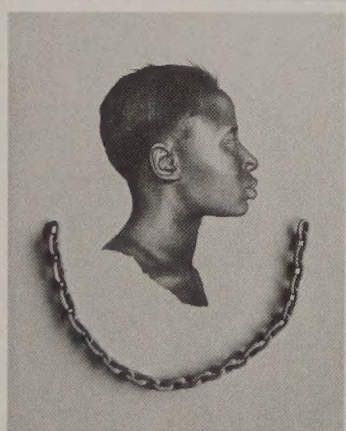
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THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW



MR

IN THIS ISSUE

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wealth of literary magazines
THE TOP TEN
Tracy Slater, August 24, 2008

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FROM THE EDITORS



A "machine made of words" is what William Carlos Williams called a poem. So here is our machine for this month, our *North American Review* engine with all the literary gears and gizmos and electric whatsits that make it run. Vroom!

Unfortunately, an erratum: in our previous issue, "Filaments of Prayer" by Christine Stewart-Nuñez, we dropped the last line. The sentence should have finished, "I grasp a tiny thread of serenity knowing I may not even recognize them when, or if, they return." Many apologies, Christine.

Good news. The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded the NAR a \$10,000 grant for publishing issues over a one-year period starting



ART WORKS.

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for the Arts
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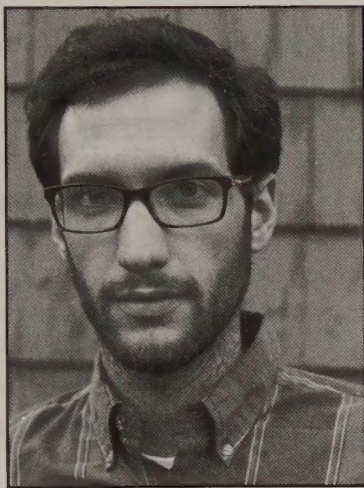
CINDY GROSS interned at the NAR in 2007 while an undergrad at the University of Northern Iowa. She read submissions, copy edited, and assisted with layout. Cindy's microfiction, "Peas," appeared in the March 2008 NAR. After graduation, Cindy worked at Oxford University Press in the journals production department for four years, overseeing the production of several academic journals. The experience led her to pursue her own freelance editing business, CMG Editing, which caters to STM and economic authors. "I love fiction, so I was surprised to find how much science and economics interest me," Cindy said. "I feel very lucky to have found this niche, and I love supporting the academic community." Congrats, Cindy!



THE 2013 JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

ANDREW PAYTON

Bad May

Lago de Atitlán, Guatemala

We heard of the violence in Sololá—
 three thieves shot a bus driver,
 but passengers turned, noosed
 the men to a truck's hitch,
 and then lynched and burned the bodies
 in the town square.

A week later
 market is as usual.
 The slap of the women's hands
 as they form tortillas.
 The sputtering diesel engine
 of the chicken buses.

Children swim
 despite *mayo mal*—
 when the rains come
 to wash the plastic, coffee
 fertilizers, and leaking septic
 into the lake and feed the toxic algal bloom—

oxygen sucked out,
 fish belly up to shore.
 Tides rise to the village feet.

Women wade through
 with plastic tubs of laundry on their heads,
 boys strip to American underwear,
 and girls with machetes bundle limbs.

FIRST PLACE • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

JOANNA THOMPSON YEZEK

Iowa Farm Sale

It's threshing time. Our lives are stacked
 in bales in the front yard. Here,
 in the bee-heavy shade of the mulberry,
 I escape the sale of my great-grandmother's
 rocking chair. Five dollars.
 With syncopated breaths, the auctioneer
 separates chaff from memory,
 but I hide my father's pocketwatch,
 slide the metal between bra and breast;
 its silver hull heavy enough to remain.
 From the front come the voices
 of buyers, the winnow of the auctioneer.
 Their laughter blows these husks
 like grit in October winds.

MARK WAGENAAR

A Phone Line to Seven Generations

You haven't seen Lebron or Kim Jong-il or a human chain in Dresden
 until you've seen them in HD, the cable guy says over the phone.

I'm gonna save you the router fee, plus waive the installation, but wait—
 there's more. HBO & Showtime's on me, too, & if you act today

I'll save you the security deposit. What did you wish you could have
 watched today? Well, I'd love to see Puyehue's volcano lightning,

or a skeleton of the extinct Red Deer People in southwest China
 meet the air for the first time in eleven thousand years. Or the moment

before the grain elevator exploded today in the Midwest. Done,
 he says, there's over ten news channels on this package, all in HD.

So when you picture the kid looking up at the grain elevators, listening
 to their jet roar, picture him & his red lunchbox in the perfect clarity

of HD. It's true, I can see the kid. I can watch the elevators ripple
 as something catches, a spark, a flame that explodes outward, the child a stitch

on the air. What else can I do today, asks the guy who holds the keys to Hades
 & the digital kingdom, but I'm still watching the dust take to the wind

& drift across the county, Davis City, Jefferson City, cities of a single bar
 & post office, cities of abandoned family farms, bound by the rope

of the Grand River, the hush of its flow a litany of foreclosures.
 What I'd like is a landline to the empty house that leans on the farm,

that bore the boy's last name for seven generations. And let the phone ring
 through the empty house, across the sunlight on the floor that spills across

bank records & the legal filings from a Monsanto lawsuit seeking damages
 for the genetically-modified seeds that rode the wind drift to the farm.

Let the phone ring through the window frames, through the tiger lilies
 & wild grapes at the edges of the property, through the corn or soybeans

planted by Syngenta or Dupont or Bayer or whoever now owns the farm,
 through the red maples & lindens & smoke trees that dot the hills in the distance,

until it reaches the boy, who has learned that nothing's as explosive as dust,
 who hardly flinches as he pulls down the memory of the house by its windows.

SECOND AND THIRD • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

BENJAMIN BUSCH

Passage

Martha died in the Cincinnati Zoo,
 1 September 1914,
Ectopistes migratorius,
 the last of her kind.
 We watch cloud shadows from weather heading east;
 heavy flocks of quiet water adrift above the fields.
 A post in our barn is rotten,
 roof sagging,
 sabotage,
 all the old bales and feathers still inside,
 the farmer's ashes spread beneath a tree.
 He flew to Florida every winter, childless and migratory,
 but he passed away here.
 We are far from cities
 where taxis move empty,
 wandering,
 their drivers understanding randomness.
 All the animals are in between the places they go
 and their return home.
 Passenger comes from *passager*,
 to pass by.
 Even in French, it does not address destination.
 I stand in the barn as its bones bend, collapsing,
 soft with the weight of hay and dust
 sky filling the space where the rest had been
 when everyone was alive,
 imprinted with a sense of direction
 like the last passenger pigeon,
 never knowing she was absolutely alone.

A. É. COLEMAN

A Man's Job

*a requiem in Italian sonnet
 for the Signalman rate*

Thumbing the brass has left my skin foam green
 with nails cracked white from the snaphook's bite
 while twenty knots tries to lift me up, right
 off the deck, a dark blue kite, face serene
 while my tricep burns and knee grinds the fife
 rail. Each flag explodes into color, wind-
 blossomed by force, the message I send
 climbing up the halyard until I knife
 the vine, snaphook it closed and bend eights
 around the pin, tying off the Old Man's
 words. I garden His yardarms, feed six lines
 of manilla flagbag seed to bloom in Fates
 the shades of His desires, this tin can's
 destiny, written in handsome designs.

HONORABLE MENTIONS • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

TESS BARRY

Not a Self-Portrait

After Simon Armitage

Her hands were trampolines spread across the lawn
 and her eyes were the pale green stones that lined a stream
 their flecks of brown were fossilized leaves
 and her blink was a well-swept room
 and her teeth were warm pads of thumbs
 and her bite was a kiss with sound.
 Her nostrils were portholes on the Queen Mary
 and her mouth was a pink life-raft blown up by self-invented pump.
 Her hair was a field of cotton picked by hand
 and her nose was a tiny drawbridge always down
 and her tongue was a candied orange peel
 and her call at dusk was a melody
 and her smile was a folded arm
 and her laugh was a bell choir practicing.
 She coughed, and it was Vermont sap.
 And her birth defect was a furry tunneled path
 and her faith was a river rising to flood
 and her neck was a steel drill-bit
 and her arms were a garden gate left open after rain.
 And her elbows were silk handkerchiefs
 and her wrists were circus rings
 and her fingers were swan necks curving back
 and her palms were desert islands
 and her shadow was a hand-held puppet.
 Her heart was a shell in a tide drawn out
 and her breasts were a ripple of water skipped
 and her shoulders were bricks laid up by hand
 and her belly was a fine down pillow
 and her private parts were the ten Hail Marys
 and her stretchmarks were a global map.
 The whole system of her blood was salt water and sand
 and her legs were sassafras trunks
 and her knees were knocking heads
 and her ligaments were relics behind glass
 and her calves were the curve of an eclipsed sun.
 The balls of her feet were soft grass
 and her toes were tiny daisies poking out
 and her footprints were breadcrumbs
 and her promises were chairs drawn to a blazing hearth
 and her one-liners were the sound of far-off drums
 and her grin was a porch light left on all night
 and the last time they talked, there was laughter.

HONORABLE MENTION • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

ROY BENTLEY

Puberty

I'm twelve. In my pj's at Gary Laberman's house on Comanche Drive. We're loud-chomping popcorn from a Tupperware bowl, when the son of Frankenstein calls that gorgeous Promethean apostasy, the Monster, "his father's work," talking theatrically in a detached tone of voice.

The Good Doctor sounds like he's going through puberty. Gary and I are sprouting hair on our gonads, having started the Sex Ed classes with our dads, watching arabesques of microscopic sperm jiggling up fallopian tubes on rapturous journeys toward making Life. The son

of the Maker of Monsters, new deed-holder to Castle Frankenstein, names the lightning-play in the picture window. Calls it magnificent. There are torches. Igor lights one in a crypt where a living-cadaver colossus sleeps on the slab above Baron von Frankenstein's grave.

And, later, there are sparking machines with chain-draped histories. The lighting in *Son of Frankenstein* is like the black-and-white films we watch in the Sex Education classes. Gary's seen them, too. He's been there, in an auditorium/gym, with a dad staring straight ahead

so he won't have to make eye contact with anyone. It's shyness, sure, and magnificent, but we're not there right now. Not hearing how the Man puts his penis in the Woman's vagina, not hearing what good it is, knowing what to do with a body you don't own yet.

Gary has his hand in the Tupperware. He's transfixed as Igor starts lecturing the son as to what it takes to carve your name into the face of Heaven and the eternal. Of course there's no rest for anyone whose superhuman heart thrums along at two hundred fifty beats per minute,

the speed of the heart of a boy upon first hearing the word *intercourse*. In a year or two, we know we'll be the Monster Who Stalks Little Girls. Any day, our phalluses will accept the cosmic jolt of Time, and grow. Any minute, we're certain, townsfolk will start lighting the torches.

FINALIST • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

MORGAN EKLUND

Middle Child Syndrome

*"Would anybody care
If such a little figure
Slipped quiet from this chair—"
—Emily Dickinson*

At Emily's Grave	the genius is self	contained. And we lament
about being middle children	between Smart and Beautiful.	She understands our liminal
spaces. We are airports—	the unlucky in Purgatory.	We stand at open windows
but they look through	us. We don't even see	us. We can't quite reach
the loud and filled places.	Where is the party?	Were we at least invited?

REBECCA FOUST

Forgotten Image

After Gaston Bachelard

Your mother, reading, on the stairs, in light
poured in a wide shaft. At night, the dull thunk
of fist into flesh, the clink-clink of his ice
in the glass. Your mother, reading. Light seen
through a chink in a cellar wall. The attic air,
dry and danced with bright motes. You know
it's there, at the top of the house, the stairs
you must muster the strength to ascend. But how?
Where is the first step? Your old notebooks,
dust-felted, stacked up somewhere. Your mother,
reading. The sense of another life, inside
and outside the walls. An attic, other upper rooms
in the home. Other homes. You are a mother now
too—so many open mouths, so much to do—
your mother, reading. To herself. Showing you.

AMY GREACEN

Amor Fati

Babe, come and get me. Seriously. This thing,
It's not my life. God damn it, do the math:
There is no start or end point in a ring.
I could hone paring knives, pull a Sylvia Plath,
Do something Not Nice. Shock the neighbors, lie
Buck-naked on the lawn waving my fist
And screaming invective at the empty sky,
Rage, rage and all—oh but you get the gist.
They say until you understand surrender
The universe will just increase the pressure
With which your face is rubbed in it. *Whatever.*
No more *no*. Darling one, by any measure,
This world's become too small. Kick in the gate
And carry me out of here before it's too late.

FINALISTS • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

TRACY FUAD

Funk, Sex, & Chocolate Milk

He presents these as the three best things,
 nothing barred, and I think
 of nothing else for two straight days.
 I lie in bed, I fantasize, I drink wine
 in the afternoon. I do dishes
 in my underwear. I see his trombone
 in the window as I walk home in the
 cold that clutches lungs, immortalizes
 cheeks, if briefly. It's mortalizing to want
 someone. It's flesh, desire, weakness.
 He has a chalkboard by his door. Among
 the poems and scribbles is the word
 "PERMANENCE" which I ask if I can add
 an IM- to. (No.) I ask if he'd be mad. (Yes.)
 I meditate on madness, on chocolate, funk,
 and sex and snow. Red wine tastes like blood
 when you're drinking it alone. I do.
 I drink and watch the snowflakes fall.
 Collecting imperceptibly. They'll melt,
 as will desire, as will flesh. Cocoa
 won't grow in the forest forever,
 and we know this, we know this.

MICHAEL DERRICK HUDSON

Ahnentafel

This cousin of mine (twice removed) paid genealogists
 to find us an archduke or a horse thief

with a handsome beard standing blurry but defiant

at the scaffold. She yearned for the *carte de visite*
 of a Confederate cavalry major stiff

in his butternut coat and braids heroically
 obliterated at Chancellorsville. Or a Choctaw Princess

in silvery white buckskins with a forever broken heart,
 a pack of timber wolves instead of dogs,

and a Lover's Leap named after her someplace
 down in Pulaski County. But they found only peddlers

and Ohio dirt farmers, delinquent tax notices, three-line

obituaries and unreadable tombstones. Somewhere back
 in the coal mining parts of Pennsylvania

a Klinkenberg married a Jones. Wilson divorced Wilson.

FINALISTS • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

SUSAN KELLY-DEWITT

Vacation in Gray

Capitola Beach, CA

The weight of the sky nicks
and dents the waters—
 a morning so swollen with gray light

even the birds fly heavily
with fog-
 bound hearts, wings hinged

with lead. And the voices of the children
at the gray
 water's edge are leaden also;

they will not fly far
before they fall
 landward again, blown back

against the thin ledge
of their lives.
 A bell buoy clangs. Boats bob

like rinds of fruit. A girl in a pomegranate
bikini floats,
 bridges a wave-trough, dives,

then rises like Venus in garlands
of seaweed and kelp.
 Tra-la, tra-la, the Angel is passing

the fog-bitten shore,
marking the names
 in blood once more

above the salt floor, the slipped latch,
the shaky,
 sea-hinged door.

PHILIP MARTIN

Ray Chapman, Killed
by Pitch August 16, 1920*For Mike Coolbaugh*

I had it in my mind to bunt
but something in the crowd distracted me—
a wrinkle in the hazel sea.

High and tight, underhanded heat
I never saw.
The sound—
a whitesick pop.
The ground.
Carl Mays looking down.
A bruised baseball rolling to the second baseman's feet.

I got up and took my base,
a warm rivulet,
etching acid,
on my face.

MATTHEW J. SPIRENG

Burnt Umber

My crayons came in plenty of colors,
but one attracted me not for its muddy tone,
but its name, the sound of the syllables,
how it felt on my tongue. Not just umber, or

burnt sienna, which weren't wonderful,
but burnt umber, a sound warm as toast
that lent itself to the paper it was pressed
against. I would search for it in the box,

shorter and shorter, worn and the paper torn
to reveal more for use. But once it was
short enough I would have to tear the name
for more, I stopped and kept it for its sound.

FINALISTS • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

ERIN MURPHY

Jane Austen's Letters to Sister Cassandra, Abridged

January 1796

I was nice.
 I behaved.
 But love
 was cut-up
 silk gloves
 and old paper
 hats. Regret
 is a vessel,
 not a spinning-wheel.
 The wind proved
 to be my
 future, delivered it
 to me with
 a sigh. I flirt
 with tears.
 I write.

MICHAEL SPENCE

Consensus

To drive at night can be lonely—behind the wheel
 Is the darkest place on the bus. I feel cut off
 From the passengers lit dimly in their seats.
 As I'm going past a stop, the bell rings.
 I keep driving. A big kid comes up: *You missed
 My stop.* Eyes on the road, I say he rang
 Too late to stop safely. He growls: *Fuck you.*

The next stop is several blocks away.
 I'm wondering what to do, when an old man
 In the aisle seat directly across from me
 Pipes up. *He's right, pal; you pulled too late.*
 The punk turns to face him. *The shit I did,*
 He spits. The other says louder: *You waited
 Too long to ring. Too slow means no go.*

Fuck you, repeats the kid. The only riders
 Besides this pair are sitting in the center
 Of the bus—three longshoremen coming home
 From swing shift. The grimmest of them says:
Zip it, dickhead—you shoulda rung before.
 As the punk looks around, the old man laughs:
So fuck you! The kid's head swings back—

Fuck you! he replies. All the longshoremen
 Like a Greek chorus yell: *FUCK YOU!*
 As though it's a stage direction, I pull the bus
 Into the next stop. The doors hiss open;
 The kid looks my way. *I know, I say—
 Fuck me.* Diving out the door, he flips
 Everyone off. We all laugh like family.

FINALISTS • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

JENNIFER MILITELLO

A Letter to the Coroner in the Voice of Marian Parker

Lay me out as if the coffin is only a dress
or a wedding I never made it to. My God, I will
run off. My family will wait and I will be free
with my hair let down and I will not return.

I do not exist. I know where I belong.
I grow like roots to slow the going open,
to suffocate a moment's recent act,
removing the blood-like gloves it leaves.

Once inside me, the seasons go arid, the seasons
go mad, they complain of brambles. The crumble
of the mud earth sings, forms rot with a sweetness
breathing. Hours are our daily bread.

There is not a cartridge for all the darkness
I feel. My face is there, a molecule, a shiver
filled with June. I have clarity. I imagine
the shatter is a shatter that stays.

I am trying not to break. Debris is all I am.
My face gaunt where once it was seamless, entrails
replaced by rags, eyelids wired open, a congregation
in my eyes with all the candles held by children.

Come. The bleed of night has
an animal skin. There is livestock
in our hearts. How the dark sticks.
How the damp animal rakes before us.

KYOKO UCHIDA

From *Mother Tongues and Other Untravelings*

—a prose poem sequence

The first foreign language I learned was my name. The summer before kindergarten, my mother taught me how to spell it, pointing to the letters she'd printed on my pencil box. I thought she was singing—a string of slow syllables without meaning but the more beautiful music for it. I didn't know that it was my name, only that it was something I would say in English, though it didn't sound like anything anyone said on the playground. I didn't know the notes were mine until weeks later, learning the alphabet, I saw that each letter had a name, separate from the sounds they made. This drawn-out name had nothing in common with the name I'd known, or even what they called me at school: It was the name of someone I was becoming, someone foreign. I was just then learning to spell myself out; at every new school, at every encounter, every time I made an appointment or a reservation, I would detail the anatomy of an unfamiliar name.

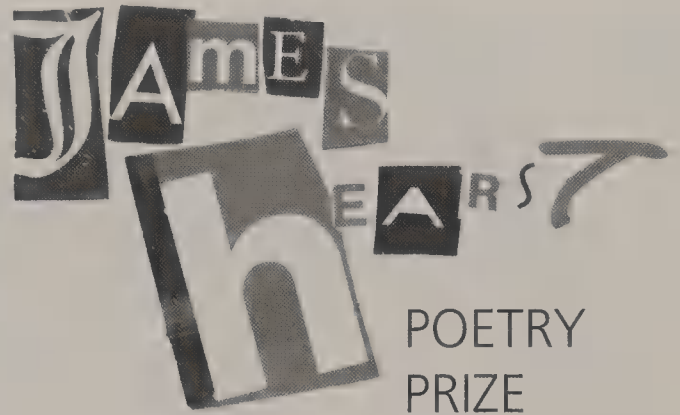
The first foreign language she taught me was my name, so that I would have a place in it, that unaccustomed music of the alphabet. So I would know how to claim myself from others, declaring myself aloud so there'd be no mistake.

FINALISTS • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

HOLLY WOODWARD

Electric Eel, Coney Island

The grey eel floats, quiet and alone,
 beside a sign that says he suffers most
 when he stings someone.
 His power has made him blind—
 he can't tell enemy from friend—
 but what friends does a knifefish have?
 The dark around flows from within.
 Socrates says, Know thyself.
 Know myself? Goethe asked,
 I'd run away in fright.
 The eel burrows into the sand
 so only his fin shows, fluttering.
 Know your enemies, Sun Tzu said.
 The eel's back is riddled with nodes to wound
 his own kind without being stung.
 Love your enemies, said Jesus.
 And start with the hardest, oneself.
 Most of the eel's flesh is devoted to holding the volts—if
 he could see his pocked skin, he'd be repulsed.
 Love oneself? Hard even to let someone else.
 Spooked by his own power when set off,
 he convulses an hour.
 Jesus said to Mary when he rose from the tomb,
 Do not touch me yet, and was gone.



1146 poems by 261 poets

JUDGE

H. L. Hix

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JAMES HEARST, a well-known "farmer poet," was a contributing editor to the *North American Review*. Many of his books, poems, stories, and articles were published before his death in 1983. *The Complete Poetry of James Hearst* was published in 2001 by the University of Iowa Press.

H. L. Hix's most recent poetry collection is a "selected poems" called *First Fire, Then Birds*, published in 2010 by Etruscan Press. His website is www.hlhix.com.

FINALIST • JAMES HEARST POETRY PRIZE

H. L. HIX

Theatrical Places

In these parts, they claim first spot on the list
of dispersals of summer midmorning sunthreat,
those sizzle-silver flares of spray from irrigation arms
satisfying semicircular swathes of corn
defined against thistle and shortgrass and scrub,
and prowled by an impossibly mangy coyote.
Plenty to see in this not-much-to-look-at,
plenty to linger over in this hurry-on-past
where, equally defeated, mortals and divinity
pull toward a more traditional unity.

How hard was it ever to replace a horizon?
Which of us has not done so, is not doing so now?
Why not build our houses into hillsides,
leave hay bales to rot in standing water?
I've been cast as a hamshambled barn falling down,
in an uneven field with creeks for crooked seams,
opposite hiveboxes propping one another up,
their dingy white a stage whisper over the meadow's rustle.
In roles more real than themselves, each performs
places and objects that embody our failed dreams.

I trust you to know this as no complaint.
I remember only the fact of the movies,
not the movies themselves, projected onto a blank
brick wall, we tenants all on blankets spread on the slope
or running among the blankets, spilling soda.
Childhood as a series of theatrical places.
I remember the gentle tingle in my throat,
the tang on my tongue, of the poison they fogged us with.
Each enspirits the rest of these bright soft insistences,
the loft of raiment transfiguring us.

Where someone shrugged before me, I too shrug.
My window overlooks an intersection at which
a light pole leans in one direction, a stop sign
in another. The streets don't make right angles.
My neighbor mows around a tree stump.
A blackbird blown backward by a rush
of wind reiterates his uniform complaint.
When does, when did, the view forward become the view back?
In that time before this time grown numb to wish,
possibilities skittered within me like neon fish.

TOM HOLMES

The Shell Girl

The shell girl collects drool
from a wounded deer
and stares into its eye
like she enters a cave.

She grinds drool into ochre.
When thick like sap,
when the mixing bone stands,
she dips a brush.

The cave wall opens
like a mollusk in fire,
she's a muscle the cave flexes,
her brush, an exposed nerve, swoops.

DEJA EARLEY

Medical Supplies and Corsets

For Munch

Even in woods, I smell
whale bones and sour milk.
I spit blood, can't
find a blue interior.

If we smash the vase,
you'll offer me plums, bloated
with sharp beaks.
You'll meet me: steel
in drizzle, steep
staircase, salt breeze.

Ready? Grind the bone
to tart powder. By
morning, we should have
the keys
to the kingdom.

One Day, One Week, An Hour

A STORY BY ERIC BARNES



Jess Fink

For reasons that can never be made clear, Nora comes home one day with a large basket of tiaras. Silver, pink and gold, the plastic tiaras seem to have been leftovers from a party.

"It's just hard to explain," she says.

Immediately, all the children—10, 11, 11 and 12 years old—put on a tiara, trading amongst each other, looking at themselves in the bathroom mirror.

"I look better in pink," Cole says.

"No, no," says Sam, his very large hair held down quite effectively by a delicate silver crown, "your color is definitely gold."

I'm not sure what attracts all the children so entirely to the basket of tiaras. They are long past the time when they'd spend whole days playing dress-up. And it's been years since the girls showed any interest in princess-themed clothing, bedding or other royal accessories. Yet the kids are drawn to the tiaras as if they are magical.

"They're going nuts," I say as the kids sort through the basket. I turn to Nora and find that she herself is wearing a dainty pink tiara with blue jewels.

She shrugs.

Ellie has hopped onto the kitchen counter and is carefully placing a purple tiara on my head. "Daddy looks so pretty," she says.

Over the coming weeks, the tiaras spread out through the house, ending up in bathrooms, bedrooms, the kitchen, even making their way into the cars and the driveway and the yard. From my desk, I can see one wrapped carefully around the lower branch of a tree. On a Saturday, while doing yard work,

I end up in what is an increasingly stilted conversation with my neighbor. Eventually, I think to ask him, "Am I wearing a tiara?"

He nods. "I wasn't sure how to bring that up."

From the dining room, where the kids are supposed to be doing homework, I hear Ellie ask, "What do monkey's hands look like?"

"I'm not sure," Carmen says, "but here, take this. It's soap. I made it for you."

"Sam," Cole says, "read this. This guy's torso is three feet tall."

"Yeah," Sam says, "but most of the length is in his chest."

I know I should intercede, should step into the room and refocus them on studying for tomorrow. But I hold off a minute. I wait.

"There's a seventh grader at school," Carmen says, "who has the *biggest* nostrils."

"And when he *flares* them," Ellie says, apparently aware of this same seventh grader and his nose, "his nostrils are as big as his *irises*."

"Even bigger!" Carmen says.

There's silence as, I soon realize, each child flares his or her nostrils, everyone assessing each other's nostril-to-iris ratio.

"Impressive," Cole says to someone, his voice slightly altered, muffled from the effort at keeping his nostrils flared as he speaks. "But it's not like your irises are dilated."

"Quick," Sam says, his voiced muffled as well, "someone turn off the lights!"

I hold off another minute. I should step in. Refocus them. Bedtime approaches. Homework is not finished. I see the light in the dining room go off.

But I wait.

Nora is trying to quote Thoreau as we get to the top of an on-ramp, talking at great length to the kids and me about finding peace and simplicity in our lives. But at the moment, the rest of us are much more focused on opening the fast food we just bought at Exit 188.

"Can anyone stop eating long enough to respond to what I'm saying?" Nora asks loudly.

The noise of the wrappers is nearly deafening. Carmen leans forward from the back seat, dangling a fry in front of Nora's mouth. Carmen loves to feed her mother.

"Apparently not," Nora says, ignoring the fry near her lips.

We're in a rented minivan, an hour from an obscure national park a few hours outside DC.

"Which is worse," I ask, "the minivan or the fast food?"

Nora finally allows Carmen to put the fry in her mouth. Carmen's smile reflects a nearly total joy. Nora is considering my question as she chews. "The minivan," she says in a moment. "It's soul sucking. At least the fast food tastes good, even if it is going to kill you. There are no redeeming qualities to the minivan."

"What?!" Cole yells from the distant reaches of the rear seat. He yells as if he's thirty feet away, in part a result of the noise of rattling paper bags and the roar of the minivan's tiny engine as I try to re-enter traffic. But he also yells because he's so excited. When he's excited, Cole talks fast, bounces in place, and yells. "What's wrong with this minivan?!" he is screaming now. "It's incredible! I have my own drink holder, a reclining seat, plus adjustable armrests. And I'll forgo mention of the built-in TV and DVD player."

I hear Nora mutter, "*Forgo*."

The kids' periodic use of unexpectedly advanced vocabulary in normal conversation is an unfortunate by-product of the vocabulary-building exercises they are continually subjected to at school.

Likewise, Sam will say.

Confinement, Ellie will say.

Decadent, Carmen will say.

Procure, Cole will say.

The effect on Nora and me is immediate, shaking our sense that we know how our children speak, that we even know who these children are. Instead they sound like impersonators of our children, child actors playing the role of our kids, actors who periodically break character through the use of a formal, foreign word.

And so we're reminded that they won't always be kids. They will some day be adults.

The vocabulary is a window on who they will become.

Cole has a way of wandering into a room as if he's at the tail end of a dance routine.

"Can we get a minivan at home?" Ellie asks.

"Never," I say.

We are often forced to rent minivans on trips, since they are usually the only available vehicle that will seat six. In some ways, I take a secret, almost untoward pleasure in our minivan excursions. It's a vision of what could have been had

my life taken a different turn. A ubiquitous house in the distant suburbs. A faceless, treeless cul de sac. A multi-doored minivan filled with TVs, drink holders, and an inconceivable amount of cargo space.

Nora and I also find a no less untoward pleasure in taking pictures of our children at historically significant sites, then sharing them with friends.

"It's like we're trumpeting our superiority as parents," Nora is saying from the passenger seat as she sends pictures from her phone.

There's mustard on her lip, but I've decided not to tell her.

"You said *trumpeting*," I say to Nora.

She doesn't respond.

The more obscure the park, the better. It's not enough for us to take the kids to the Washington Monument, although we've done that. We need to take them to Appomattox, site of Lee's surrender at the end of the Civil War, where we will explain to the kids the significance of the location, then take a picture of the four of them in front of a cannon, a photo that Nora will send to friends with the subject line, "Kids at Appomattox, site of the surrender of the Confederate Army at the end of the Civil War."

It's a form of torment for some people, our friends and family who feel certain they are failing to expose their children to enough intellectual stimulation and properly educational experiences. In truth, Nora and I are just as certain that we are failing on these fronts as well. Nora, a high school English teacher, continually comes home with stories of the things her students have seen that we've failed to show to our children. "We've got to get these kids to the Hoover Dam!" she'll declare. "If we keep wasting time, they'll be in college before we've had a chance to take them to see Old Faithful!"

The fact that we feel these insecurities is, however, irrelevant as Nora uploads more photos from our trip.

"Would Thoreau use a camera phone?" I ask her.

She ignores me.

"Daddy," Ellie asks, "who's Thoreau?"

Sam answers her. "He's the guy who lived in the woods."

Nora turns her head just slightly, smiling vaguely, happy that at least some of what she's said about Thoreau has actually sunk in.

"Why'd he live in the woods?" Carmen asks. "Was he poor?"

"No," Cole says. "He had a house."

"But it was small," Sam says. "And he didn't have much in it." He takes a bit of his hamburger, but continues to talk. "He thought it was important to be bored."

Nora closes her eyes. Sighs.

"It seems like I've heard of him," Carmen says, leaning forward with another french fry for her mother, beginning to wave it in a small, enticing circle. "Mommy, have you heard of him?"

"Nope," Nora says. "Never have."

She still has mustard on her lip. And I'm still not going to tell her.

Sam has brown hair, thick and curly hair that, if he chooses, he can poof outward two or more inches from his scalp.

Cole has flat, plain hair, somewhere between brown and blonde, yet it is usually twisted in strange waves, mostly pointed up, and no matter how much combing he does, the hair keeps standing up and out in multiple directions.

Ellie's hair is long by her choice, yet every morning she pulls it as tightly as possible to her head, tying a ponytail at the back, pulling it with the force of a ship's mate lashing an anchor to the bow, her hair now flush with her scalp, and it's like she doesn't have long hair at all.

Carmen possesses a labyrinth of brown hair, long, thick, tangled and matted beneath its otherwise smooth surface, and sometimes, when she shakes out a ponytail, there will be small objects—a barrette, a rubber band, small sticks, an acorn—that all come flying out.

In eight years all of them will be out of the house. The past eight years have gone by so very quickly, each one faster than the last, as if once the kids were up and walking and talking and off to pre-school, the clock on our lives began to shrink, just a little, each year.

Often, when we're all in a store together, Carmen will pretend that she does not know Nora, me or any of the other kids. She gets her own cart and goes off in the opposite direction from us. She wanders the aisles on her own and, if we come across her, she won't look at us, instead walking past us, sometimes lightly singing to herself as—turning her back to us—she surveys fruit in a display, a t-shirt on a rack.

It's not so much that she feels disdain for Nora or me. And she's not embarrassed by being with us at a store.

As best we can tell, she's practicing being an adult.

Nora has just found a bag of water in the living room. "Why is there a bag of water in the living room?" she asks, entering our bedroom as I lay flat on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. Resting.

"A project," I say. "Ellie's."

"For class or personal enjoyment?"

"Personal enjoyment," I say.

"We should put some rules in place regarding these projects," she says.

"Yes," I say, still staring up at the ceiling.

She's gone into the closet. She is apparently changing clothes. Or just hiding out for a moment.

I picture the bag of water, nearly a quart of red-dyed water in a resealable plastic bag, sitting on the floor of the living room. It's a precarious vision.

Projects are set up throughout the house. Stray branches the boys are turning into spears. Old plates the girls are painting gold and silver. Boats made of aluminum foil that the kids are going to float down the gutters in the rain.

Nora and I are constantly monitoring these projects, at once encouraging the kids to be creative, to spend time on things other than TV or video games, yet forced to harass the kids into cleaning up after themselves.

"Take those branches back outside," I will say.

"Wash those brushes and the counter," Nora will say.

"Are you done turning this foil into boats?" I have to ask.

"By the way," Nora now says to me, her voice muffled as she speaks from the closet, "why are you lying there in a tiara?"

Cole has a way of wandering into a room as if he's at the tail end of a dance routine. He is continually entering rooms backwards, mid-turn, his hands high above his head, or low at his sides.

He does this now, snapping two fingers as he turns the corner into the kitchen.

"What's up, big boy?" I ask him from behind the counter.

He flashes me a big thumbs up. "Unemployment, crime, certainly not the stock market. How are you?"

And so begins another scene of afterschool chaos. There will be homework, play, reading, assorted projects, multiple rounds of individual snacks, at least one argument between some pairing of children, or between a child and an adult, all of it moving toward sports practices, dinner, and bed.

It's 4:00 now and I'll spend much of the next two hours in the kitchen, stationed at the counter. I am, it seems, perpetually standing behind the kitchen counter.

The kids' arrival home after school often feels like an assault on the house, jackets, backpacks, shoes and books all cast out from their bodies, landing on every possible surface. The house seems to sway a bit under the weight of their arrival. They crash up and down the stairs. They pile out the front door, tumble in through the back. Balls bounce off walls. Music blares from earphones.

The boys, inevitably, are found crawling around on the floor.

The girls, inevitably, have started some sort of project on the kitchen counter.

Over the next few hours, shoes will be left out. Homework will be abandoned mid-chapter, books and notebooks will be left open on the dining room table. Snacks will be eaten down to the final bite, which is then left on a table or chair.

By 8 o'clock, the house often carries the air of a New Year's Eve party.

A cleanup ensues, the kids gathered like convicts on a penal farm, assigned to workgroups and tasks, Nora and I monitoring their progress, watching out for distractions, keeping them focused on cleaning up their mess.



I've considered buying a bullhorn. Nora wants a whistle. Some day, though, we'll miss this noise. We'll think back on the assaults. We'll wonder if it all really was as we remember.

I walk into the boys' room on the third floor. Theoretically, they've been up here doing homework for the last hour.

"Why aren't you two doing your homework?" I ask very calmly.

They glance at each other. "How do you know we aren't doing homework?" Cole asks.

"Well," I say, "the first clue is that you're both standing up. The second is that neither of you has books or binders open on your desks. The third is that your book bags are downstairs."

Both boys nod deeply. "Right," Sam says.

"The fourth clue," I continue, "is the ski masks each of you has pushed back on your heads. The fifth clue is the music that's playing—dark, mysterious, insidiously compelling, like the soundtrack to a ninja movie."

Both boys glance at each other again. Cole winces. Sam clicks his tongue.

In a moment, I continue.

Mid-sentence Ellie says suddenly, loudly, "It's 3:33—make a wish."

I realize she does this a lot lately. At certain times of the day calling out for everyone to make a wish. I wonder if she has somehow embraced numerology.

"Were Lewis and Clark the first people to cross the Rockies?" Ellie asks me now. "Or just the first *explorers*?"

Ellie has long had a deeply obsessive-compulsive streak when it comes to completing her homework. She insists on doing her work in the optional study hall held after school, then, at night, she'll hurl questions at me in an attempt to find some mistake she might have made.

"What did your book say?" I respond.

She rolls her eyes. Lets out a sharp breath. "Daddy, I know what the *book* said. But I want to know what *you* think. I mean, maybe the book is *wrong*."

She's sitting at the dinner table, going over all of her homework for what could be the third time, searching for some question she may have gotten wrong.

I say to her, "I think you'll just need to go with the answer you've found. I can't tell you if you're right."

Her jaw drops, her eyes wide. "You *can't* tell me? Or you *won't* tell me?"

I consider this for a long, extended moment. "Won't," I finally answer.

"Why?" she nearly screams.

In these moments, Ellie has a way of highlighting at least one word in every sentence.

I turn back to her.
"You're not saying
that the things come
true because of
the ads?"

"Ellie," I say calmly, "there's no need for me to do that. You've read the book. You've gone through every question three or four times. There's nothing more for me—or you—to do."

"But what if I've *missed* something!?" she laments, slumping back in her chair.

"Then I suppose you'll get a couple points off your homework," I say.

"A couple *points*!?"

I shrug. I leave the room.

"Why are you *shrugging*!? Why are you *leaving* the room!?"

"It's a life lesson," I say to her from the kitchen. "You have to learn to let go."

An hour later, I find her slumped over the table, using her binder as a pillow, her arms clutching it like a treasured stuffed animal or blanket.

I carry her up to bed, one of the first times I've done so in years. She's much bigger now and I have to pause halfway up the stairs, for a moment watching her eyes closed, cheek against my arm, sleeping.

It's hard not to worry. It's hard, sometimes, to tell yourself they will ultimately be okay.

"Sometimes," Sam says, "I'd like to wear a dress. It'd just be like wearing a long T-shirt. But without pants."

The boys have swathed themselves in multiple blankets and are sliding around on the floor. Their bodies are completely covered. Only their legs are loose enough to move and, even then, the legs have to move simultaneously in a single forward push. They have turned themselves into inchworms, apparently, although I'm not sure they would see it that way. They are calling the setup a "pod," which, for them, has a futuristic, even militaristic air to it.

But they look like gigantic inchworms, two huge masses pushing themselves slowly across the entryway, unknowingly on course for a slow-motion collision with the heavy front door.

Ellie is sitting on a bench in the entryway, eating a bowl of cereal. Watching the boys.

"What are they doing?" I ask her.

She glances at me. She shrugs and shakes her head.

There seems to be no bottom depth to the boys' capacity for inane behavior. They'll emerge from their rooms wearing shorts on their heads. They'll take turns tying each other to the porch furniture with vines they've found in the backyard. They'll wrap themselves in blankets and slide around the floor saying, "I'm a pod! I'm a pod! I'm a pod!"

In the entryway now, one of the boys—I think it's probably Cole, based on the relatively smaller size of the pod—makes a major push with his legs. Beneath the folds of his blanket, I can hear him grunt.

He moves about six inches. Ellie slowly raises her feet as the other pod—Sam's, it would seem—methodically nears the bench.



"How long have they been doing this?" I ask Ellie.

From beneath Cole's pod, I hear a muffled scream, "A half hour!"

Ellie shakes her head. She mouths the words *an hour* to me. She motions me closer, then whispers, "They think they're in the kitchen."

Carmen walks into the entryway, lightly stepping over Sam's pod, then stopping to look around at the scene. After a moment of studying the direction in which the boys are headed, she opens the front door.

"Cole!" Sam screams, albeit in a distant, stifled voice. "I can hear the out of doors! I think we're almost to the back door! We're almost to our base!"

Carmen frowns and leaves the room. Ellie shakes her head very slowly. The girls are continually baffled by this sort of behavior by the boys, these older brothers for whom they have endless, if largely unspoken, affection, boys whose attention they thrive on and crave. How can they love these people who are now rolling around on the floor? How can the boys be acting like science-fiction creatures? How can their brothers be so incredibly stupid?

I wonder what it is doing to the girls in the long-run, wonder how their notions of affection and attraction, of closeness and connection, are being altered or even wounded by the behavior of their brothers. Will they go to college and ignore the overtures of the smart and mature young men around them, yet respond dutifully, almost unwillingly, to the juvenile antics of the idiot boys hanging from the roof of a fraternity house?

Thirty minutes later, I see the pods in the front yard, now rolling across the grass, the boys apparently having evolved into a quicker but no less random form of locomotion. Ellie is sitting near the curb, back to the street, watching the pods roll in opposite directions.

"You're not going to let them roll into the street, are you?" I ask Ellie.

She flips me a thumbs up.

I hear Cole's quiet yell, "Did someone say we're near the street?!"

Carmen is watching TV in the den. "Are there really people who don't have legs?" she calls out to anyone who might hear.

We're twenty minutes into a typically loud and conversationally disjointed meal at the dinner table when Cole hops up from his chair, then drops to the floor near the table. His knees and arms are flat against the ground, his head is pressed against his forearms, but his butt is sticking up in the air.

"We had a speaker in class today!" he announces loudly, with his face pressed into his arms. "This is the best position to assume if you want to survive a tornado!"

It's less than three seconds before the rest of the kids are on the floor, four butts in the air.

Nora and I left alone to stare at each other across the now empty table.

Somewhere around the corner from the kitchen, maybe it was upstairs, I hear a massive and extended crash followed by what sounds like crying. I run around the corner. At the foot of the stairs I find the boys, wrapped up in two blankets, locked together awkwardly, laughing silently now, hysterically, as they've completed a two-man luge down the staircase.

"Is anyone hurt?" I ask.

"Yes," one of them says as they roll about, writhing in pain or still lost to laughing. "Badly."

"There's a product for this," Nora is saying.

"For what?"

"For this!" she says, turning to me and pointing at her eyes, both hands raised, index fingers extended, mouth slightly open as she nods at me with a mix of impatience and disdain. "Puffy eyes!"

"Okay."

"No, not 'okay.' This is what happens."

"What is what happens?"

"This! These are the things that come true. Suddenly you wake up like you have for the last 40 years but then you realize you have puffy eyes and then you remember that, for the last decade, you've been skimming past advertisements for puffy eyes."

I nod. Her eyes seem no different now than any other evening we've had. And she is more beautiful now than when we met.

"So now I need to start using a product for puffy eyes."

In a moment, I say, "Maybe just some ice would help."

"It's not a bruise!" she yells in my direction. "I wasn't in a goddamned boxing match! It's age! Here," she says, picking up a magazine from her bedside table, then thumbing through pages. She raises her voice as she reads a product description. "*Works to decrease under-eye puff.*"

She turns to me.

I nod. "It's even got its own name," I say helpfully. "*Under-Eye Puff*. It's sort of like *Irritable Bowel Syndrome*. Or *Herpes Simplex*."

She ignores me. She turns back to the magazine and thumbs through the ads, pausing to read aloud the detailed descriptions of the symptoms and conditions various products can cure.

I start to leave the room, but pause for a moment. I turn back to her. "You're not saying that the things come true *because of* the ads?"

She doesn't look up as she answers. "All I'm saying is that you read about these things and then they come true," she says, skimming pages before turning them. "You draw your conclusions, I'll draw mine."

There is, unquestionably, a sense of predestination in the household. Not predestination of the religious or magical sort. It's the predestination of the simple and routine. Our march told old age, the kids' march toward their teenage years, even the progressive breakdowns in cars, appliances, plumbing fixtures throughout the house. The constant

unloading and reloading of the holiday items stored in their thick plastic bins in the attic. All this marks not just the passage of time, but the steadily increasing pace of that passage. *There is no way, I find myself thinking, that it's been a full year since I hauled these Christmas lights down two flights of stairs.*

Magazine renewals arrive in rapid succession through the mail slot by the front door. I realize I've worn the same black sweatshirt every Saturday for the last five week-ends. I find old birthday cards under the kids' beds. These things mark time and its movement, the constant forward progression away from what we know has happened and toward some future that we can, with increasing clarity, foresee.

I remember when the future was so much more of an unknown. When I woke up as a kid and did not know what would happen to me that day. I don't necessarily miss that uncertainty. I don't entirely dislike the preordained nature of the days and nights the six of us share.

But it leaves me slightly breathless as our days unfold.

"I don't want the details," Nora is saying from the other room, "but if you're having any issues with your prostate, they have products for that too."

I nod to myself. I make a mental note. I don't yet have any issues with my prostate. But could there be any harm in starting to skim the ads now?

"That's it!" Carmen yells to anyone in the kitchen who's listening. "I'm running away!" Everyone looks at her. She smiles. "I want to live in a tree!" she says happily.

"I want to live on a lake!" Ellie says.

"I want to live on a mountain!" Cole says.

"I don't want to move!" Sam says.

Nora, as she moves from dishwasher to the stove, mutters, "I want to live in a hotel."

Nora is sitting next to me in bed. She is wearing what is, as best I can tell, the last of the tiaras. The upper tips of the purple crest are broken off, the plastic jewels have all fallen out. But still the tiara holds Nora's hair off her face.

We are both staring forward. Slouched slightly. Tired and worn from the day.

"Is it clear that we love them?" Nora asks.

I nod. It's another long moment before I remember she's not looking at me. "Yes," I say.

"There's so much ordering them around," she says. "So much correction of bad behavior."

The tiara has slid to the left. I realize her eyes look different. I wonder if I should mention these things. Wonder if Ellie let herself stop studying and if Carmen put away the glue and paper and scissors she'd spread all across the kitchen, and I wonder if that noise I hear above the two of us, if it's the boys not sleeping but starting to wrestle across the floor.

But I only slide Nora's tiara back onto the top of her head. Hold her hand. And in a few minutes, we're asleep. □

YAN LIN

The Hundredth Day

In China, it is the custom to burn incense and paper money, in addition to making offerings, at the graves of loved ones on the hundredth day of their passing.

Jilin's best necropolis
is guarded by kirin, rams, and elephants
of white cement and stone.

Offerings in hand,
my father, his sister, her husband, and I
ascend the built-hill, its tile paths dusty
with trampled centipedes
whose carapaces' shine
deceive, suggest wetness.

Last night's storm has disrupted the garlands
that drag where we'll burn agar- and sandal-woods.

Our tomb's slick with dew
and at its base, dandelions
thrive tall and luxuriant.

Squatting, Auntie grips one at its base
where, just below, the roots
grip the earth in an iron clasp.
Every fall, the perpetual gardener
will shear it at that base and
every spring, it resurrects itself
ugly and persistent and perfect.

If you fry them she says,
hand full of dandelion leaves
with lard, garlic,
and Poppa's baby chilies—

—*airen* (beloved) our chili-planter
demurs *perhaps not graveyard greens.*

A bundle of red incense, thick around
as a child's thigh, is lit
is consumed, crumbles to ash.

A westward wind carries its spirit
beyond the eight-arched bridge
the carp swarming in the shallows.

Here and there, from rows upon rows
of similar tombs, come similar wisps
soon dispersed through finely-etched firs
and joyful stands of peonies, white and red.

The Tucker Boys

A STORY BY DEBORAH KENNEDY



Jared Rogness

Ma Tucker might have died but that doesn't mean we have to bury her.

It's within our rights to stick her up in a tree for the buzzards if we want. That or leave her in one of the caves off Route 9, the small one with the X-rated paintings where the tourists never go. If she's AWOL the next morning like the son of God, well. Praise him.

She was our mother after all and so it isn't anybody's business what we do with the body. What she did to ours, Jesus Christ. Beat us soon as hug us, caned us before breakfast, tied us by our wrists to the kitchen table, the toilet, the nettle bushes out back where she kept Dad's ashes in a rusted butter churn as a reminder. *This is what life does to you. If you're lucky. No matter what happens today, you ain't getting out of this alive.*

Ma Tucker. Turned us hard then turned us out. One by one we ended up in the street, in our friends' cars and on girls' couches and under overpasses with strangers who told us "the end of the world is near so why not give us a blow?" At one point, we settled for the Baptist church basement, but the minister had a black heart like everyone, so we nailed him to the Sunday school bulletin board with the cardboard cut-out of the Virgin Mary and threw apples at him until he uncled.

She took us all back eventually. Had to or she'd lose that monthly government check she spent on groceries and TV shopping network costume jewelry. Loved the big hoop earrings, Ma did. Pop beads, too. Peacock lapel pins. Rings with stones the color of a river. Tiaras, pointy as a castle tower. "Thou shall not pass!" When she died she was wearing one. No shit. A tiara.

Ma was never much to look at alive and dead it's as if everything worthwhile on her's collapsed. On the muggy morning

we find her body, stiff and bluing in her quilted housecoat, Ralph whispers, "Jabba the Hutt," but Lulu says, "Don't you guys know it's bad luck to speak ill of the dead?"

Bad luck? Bad luck's been our best friend since the day we were born and anyway, no one ever taught us right from wrong. No one taught us left from right, either. We had to school ourselves.

School of hard knocks? Sure. School of cold mornings, of empty stomachs, of broken sores and sore throats and bleeding fingers and head lice and Beebee guns and dead dogs and tick bites and gun butts. School of rusty cars and gonorrhea girls and cockfights and hell and a hard place. No way out. Learn fast or die young. Right? Right.

It was cancer that took her. Lung, we figured but it could have been breast. None of us wanted to get that close, especially at the end when she started to smell like spilled milk. The mattress? Trashed. The room? A ruin. A fleabag motel. A heartbreak hotel too. Ma's cat, Hustler, kicked off on the floor near the hope chest. Her only company before Lulu came. Well, besides us, but Ma always said we didn't count, that we were the worst company she'd known since *Three's Company*.

Doesn't matter. Water off our backs because we're good enough for us. We've never been lonely, baby. We got our brothers to keep us warm. Not literally. We sleep separate but that's about all we do alone. We can thank Ma for that. Other brothers we've known have fought like dogs—the Grayson brothers, the Swopes—but Ma's meanness stuck us together like glue. Don't get us wrong—we have our women, back-of-the-bike girls with strong thighs and a good grip, but they never last long and we like it that way. Ma scared most of them off, even Hank's Theresa who held on for a time on

account of the baby and now lives in the next county, cashiering at the Dollar General. Hank sees her once in a while, brings toys to the boy and wants to do more. Problem is, Theresa won't have it. Says we're a bad influence. Not Hank, necessarily, but all of us. Says we're the kind of package deal guaranteed to explode upon delivery, told Hank to come by himself or not at all, which hurts our feelings, but whatever. Women.

"I'm sad," Lulu says.

We're standing over the body, arms crossed, kind of staring.

Hank nods. I can tell by his eyes he's having a tough time. Ma loved Hank the most. Hence, beat him the least. Hank's the sweet one, the sensitive one. Never says anything but we know what he's thinking. Telepathy. Even though we're not triplets—Ralph's the oldest, then there's me, then Hank, all basically one year apart—we've got powers, another reason, I guess, to thank Ma, who was born with the second sight. I mean real magic. Woman had a witch for a mother, a bit of stuff we called Grandmarm, famous for casting spells and making draughts and changing the course of at least one river. We never saw Ma do much with geography, but she did take up the spell and draught side, casting bad luck charms on her enemies, which was pretty much everyone in Legacy Trailer Park. Funny, because it's not that they needed it, being pretty down and out to start with. Who knows if the spells, which usually involved a lot of speaking in tongues and waving a wand about and burying strange things in the backyard or in the cornfield behind the park pool, ever amounted to much, but the potions. The potions. Those were the real thing. On weekends when we were young, Ma would turn our kitchen into one big mad scientist's den—bubbling beakers and smoky tubes and smelly pots full of God knows what—and what she didn't feed us she sold to the same people she'd put a curse on the week or month before. Potions to cure acne and morning sickness and insomnia and warts. Potions for falling in love and out of love and for making your lover disappear. For a good twenty years, in fact, right up until she got sick, Ma alternately fixed up and fucked up the entire neighborhood. It was how she supplemented her meager income and kept Pa Tim in bad beer. It was how she amused herself.

Too bad Ma couldn't just bob her head like the chick on *I Dream of Jeannie* and clean the room and dispose of herself. We plug our noses and consider. Ralph's first thought is to torch the place: Ma's bed, and then burn the whole lot of it—the jewelry, the baskets full of romance novels, Ma's clothes heaped on two chairs in the closet where the cat slept. Then the hallway full of newspapers, our rooms full of rats, the kitchen/living room/weapons warehouse (sans our weapons, of course, worth at least five figures), the potion closet, which would probably blow the whole park sky-high. The trailer's the only home we've ever known, but fuck. It's destroyed. Why not just pour some gasoline around the perimeter and be done with it? But then Hank whispers, "Insurance fraud,"

which makes us all stop and think again. More jail for sure and maybe maximum security. The judge, the one who gave Ralph two years last time, would shit his robes. No more mister nice guy.

And, besides, Lulu needs somewhere to live. The road's good enough for us, but Lulu's a girl and she likes to smell

good and look good. We put in a new, mold-resistant shower surround just for her. We probably shouldn't have taken her in last month when her mother, a sort of Mexican Ma Tucker who'd long ago partnered up with Ma's cousin Brenn, got deported in an ICE raid, but then Lulu showed up on our front stoop with nothing but a duffle bag of clothes and candy and some

bus dirt under her pretty eyes and what were we supposed to do? Turn her out in the cold like Ma's done to us? Hell no. Plus, she asked nicely. "Can I pretty please stay with you boys?" There is no refusing our cousin Lulu.

Same goes for today when she dries her cheeks with Ralph's hanky and says in this firm, decided way, "Kentucky."

We say, okay. Kentucky. Sounds good. Hills. Bluegrass. Moonshine. But why?

"That's where Ma's from. Remember?"

Oh right. Duh. Kentucky, where Ma was born and Grandmarm, too. We met Grandmarm just once, during a trip Pa Tim and Ma saw fit to take to Ma's stomping grounds to celebrate some anniversary. We stayed in Grandmarm's house with Grandmarm and Uncle Joe and at night Hank cried because the coyotes howling outside the window scared him and because Grandmarm made fun of his limp. Kentucky. Even poorer than home. Washers and dryers hooked up outside and sheltered under truck cap overhangs. Two blonde girls at the moonshine still asking Uncle Joe and Pa Tim if they wanted some company for the night and Ma grabbing both girls by their hair and shoving them off, telling them to go home to their mothers for fuck's sake, how old were they? Twelve? Then, while we were leaving, Grandmarm putting a spell on Pa Tim so he wouldn't get motion sick on the way home, and Uncle Joe saying goodbye to us by shooting a few rounds into the cold, Sunday air.

"Kentucky," Lulu says again. "It's what Ma would have wanted."

We all nod this time, although the truth is we'd sort of forgotten about what Ma wanted besides us out of her face. Anytime we'd do something wrong, which was a lot, she'd yell, "Get outta my face!" Like when Ralph led that drunk midnight ride to Shipshewana and back because he wanted to see if Amish girls really did bathe in milk (they don't) and poor Ginger Simpson got dumped in a ditch and died, leaving her son Duran to hack it out in this world all motherless and afraid of the dark. "Get outta my face!" Ma yelled. Or the time I decided to add meth to my chili at the Super Bowl party and Lorraine Shepherd died in the back room, leaving her daughter Bitty alone and prone to steal. "Get outta my face!"

Ma screamed, running from me down the hallway and waving her arms around her head like she was warding off flies. Sometimes, for variety's sake, she'd switch it up, pound the walls of the trailer and say, "Sons? Sons? Drains! Drains on the system and I'm the system. Stick a spigot in me, why don't you? Right here, just below my heart. And grab a bucket for the blood."

Lulu knew a different side of Ma. She knew the sick side, the dying side, the too weak to hit side, and somehow, while we were gone on poker runs or at work, the odd jobs we could pick up despite probation and a few felonies between us, the girl and the old broad formed a bond. At first, over the books, the love stories Lulu read to Ma every night and most mornings, one paperback per week. Then they started talking.

"What did you two find to talk about?" we ask now.

"Her life," Lulu says.

Ah. Ma's life. Right. Righto. She was born. She screamed, she yelled, she smacked and kicked and bit and wailed. She called us all motherfuckers. Then, when we stuck our tongues out at her, said, "That makes you dirty," she threatened to hang us from the ceiling by our thumbs. Too bad the ceiling's drop.

But she loved us, too. In her own way, and so we can't help it. We grow rather reverent and soon we're sharing. Memories.

Ralph starts. "Remember that Christmas when Ma made Pa Tim get us a real tree because Pa and his buddies ruined the fake one by accident trying to insulate the back room with a fire extinguisher?" Ralph covers his eyes. His mustache is damp. "I loved that tree. The real one, I mean."

It was a good tree. And when Christmas was over we got to chop it up and use the wood to make a set of arrows, which Ma said we could shoot at the Swope boys. Periodically.

"Remember when she took us to see the Harlem Globetrotters even though she couldn't afford it and we snuck Hank in in my coat?"

Ralph and Hank look at me, blankly at first, then with recognition. "Ma said, 'Damn, these niggers can really play,'" Ralph says, slapping a knee.

Lulu shakes her head. We've disappointed her. We're always disappointing her. "Did you know that she rode a bus to protest this black lady getting hit with a hose? Rode a bus all the way to Alabama or maybe Mississippi. Doesn't matter. What matters is she did it because she believed in civil rights."

Now that we didn't know. If Ma cared about the plight of the African-American we never saw it except for those few months after Pa Tim died when she dated a lanky black man in town for a month with the circus.

"Lion tamer," Ralph says. He cracks the air. "Where's my whip?"

"Also that she used to sew clothes for this one lady who had no hands and three kids to take care of"

We're all a sudden remembering that summer when the sewing machine whirled in tune with the cicadas and Ma seemed to produce one white, bluegill-sized sock after another, eventually gathering all the stuff into Pa Tim's big Marine-issued

duffle and humping it down the street to a trailer that looked even worse than ours.

Hank says, "I was there when she dropped it all off. She dumped it all in one big pile on the floor and it was higher than the kids and the lady with no hands cried because she was so happy."

That seems to warrant a moment of silence. Both the fact that Hank talked and that Ma made another woman cry with gratitude. We stare at each other a moment. Our minds are somewhat blown.

"We have to get Ma home," Lulu says. "It's only right and you boys have been wrong for so long this just might do some good. You know. Cosmically. Get you into heaven."

We don't punch her like we might someone else who used the word "cosmically" or talked about heaven like it was a definite possibility for us. Lulu's so pretty when she says things so sweet and serious and everything Ma's not, that making fun of her feels like that one time we set fire to a nest of baby ferrets. So home it is.

We head out to our bikes, and while Lulu's inside packing, we stuff Ma, mummied up in her pink bedsheets, into Hank's sidecar. Problem is, she doesn't fit all the way, sort of sticks out the top.

"Shit," Ralph says. "That fucking tiara."

"Take it off," I say.

Hank shakes his head. Wouldn't be right. Ma loved that tiara. So Ralph runs inside, grabs one of my iron maidens and wraps Ma in it, bungeeing it carefully closed so it doesn't puncture anything. She's armored now. She's all right. She's Queen Ma and nothing will ever hurt her again.

"To Kentucky!" I shout, fist-pumping the air.

"To Kentucky!" Lulu says. She hops on with me and circles my waist with her arms, which sound like wind chimes orbited as they are with at least forty of Ma's old bangle bracelets.

"To Kentucky!" Ralph says, but Hank raises his hand like "wait" and hobbles off his bike into the backyard. When he reappears, he's got Pa Tim's ashes under one arm.

Lulu sighs with satisfaction. We'll spread him over her. Makes some sort of cosmic sense, even if they did fight tooth and claw their entire lives.

We boys would be the first to admit that at first we'd thought burning in effigy. We thought, fuck it. Anything to get Ma out of our faces. But we've changed our mind. There's a graveyard behind Grandmarm's where they buried the witch and Uncle Joe and everyone Ma Tucker loved before us. A pretty spot with a sweet gum tree and a bramble bush. Remember? Hank thinks. I remember, Ralph thinks back. Ironweed this time of year. Goldenrod. Ghosts. That river Grandmarm rerouted, only it's probably dry as a bone. We can see it all and so we all nod, rev, ride and when it comes time to turn south and Lulu asks over the roar of the engine if we should have brought a map, I tell her chill. Everything's cool. Everything's fine. The Tucker boys know exactly where they're going.

The earth will be hard, but we'll put our shoulders to it. She was our mother after all. □



RACHEL ADAMS

Shark Message

I found a white shell shaped like a shark's
tooth, light and porous,
on a beach pockmarked by tourists,
umbrellas popping from the sand
like bright buboes, scattered for miles.

I'll bury this tooth in the sand,
down with the insects
and the ancient rubbed-down glass.

I'll notice the flat wideness of the water.
Through the radios, the reddish round
bodies, the grate of voices,
I'll notice the gulls that lay
on the salt air, the grid of clouds,
the thin triangles of sky.

EMILY HOCKADAY

The Retired Magician

Afterward—once the rabbit had arthritis, and refused
to sit in the hat,

the sashes weren't bright or clean,
and needed mending,

as the legs left,
apart from the torso saying,

I deserved a higher salary for this,
and there was no mending
that breach—

What is there to do but forget
about magic? Admit you will never find

that person you put
in the mirrored box
who didn't come out
once the curtain was drawn.

HEATHER SELLERS

I Swam Where Johnny Was Tarzan

My father preached to the poor girl in the lodge
at the bar. Gators lined the banks. At the spring head,
I posed on the top platform, flew straight out down in.
Arrow. The river water was so cold blue it was clear.
I dove through air, liquid, then into Florida.
Under the gators. I swam all the way
down to the limestone lattice tombs. I let the river
in me. Not him. I never let him touch me.
Yes, it had looked like man and wife. I was a girl
then and shining like rain. Like in movies, I was under
water, breathing down there, a metaphor
but real. As in a myth.

Whole New World

A STORY BY JONATHAN WEI



Wesley Allisbrook

One June night at age fifteen, Jimbo stole a bottle of something sweet from his father's liquor cabinet after his parents had gone to bed. He'd just watched Jack Nicholson in *Five Easy Pieces* and had taken to the notion that he had one last bid for freedom and that he'd better take it. This in spite of his being only fifteen.

He snuck his mom's Jetta out of the driveway, pushing it into the street and then coasted to the corner before turning the key. He drove to the edge of town, pulled onto the shoulder of the access road that paralleled the interstate, got out and lay on the warm hood of the VW sipping Dubonnet and wondering whether he wanted to hitch a ride north or south out of Fairlane, MO.

When he woke up, Officer Richard Dental was shining his headlights, spotlight and flashlight in Jimbo's face, imparting the momentary impression to the boy that his moment to walk into the bright place at the end of the line had come. It hadn't though, and Officer Dental discerned 3 things in fairly short order: a) Jimbo had stolen a vehicle; b) he was fifteen years old and not licensed to drive; and c) he was inebriated and driving. And there was the fourth thing, d) which was that Jimbo was fifteen and inebriated, which was an offense to itself.

Though a little hungover, Jimbo was also still quite drunk and still in a Jack Nicholson state of mind.

"You're the fattest cop I've ever seen."

Dental put Jimbo in handcuffs and pushed his face down on the warm hood of the Jetta at the intersection of Murray Street and Access Way, where the street lights were greenish and where in one direction there was nothing to see but the elevated highway and in the other nothing to see but the impenetrable black of farm fields.

"You fat fuck," Jimbo said quite clearly in spite of having his lung capacity compromised by Officer Dental's hand and considerable bulk leaning into the middle of his back.

Officer Dental then swatted Jimbo across the back of his head, then did it again, then punched him in the neck, then grabbed the Kevlar disposable handcuffs and lifted with enough force to break Jimbo's left arm below the shoulder and above the elbow like a fistful of dry spaghetti. And then, because he was still in a bad mood, Officer Dental lifted higher and back in the other direction and broke Jimbo's other arm.

Jimbo despised New Smyrna, which was where his parents moved shortly after the breaking of his arms. He despised it mostly because there was nothing *to* the place—nothing for Jimbo at any rate. It was a dense oceanside community in northern Florida populated mostly by old white people who demanded from life exactly what was provided by

early-bird-specials, Wal-Mart and forgiving golf courses. There was the ocean, of course, but New Smyrnians went to the beach like they were going to the mall. Jimbo couldn't figure out why the hell his parents had decided to move there, but that was the way it was with his parents. He'd never figured out why they had moved to Fairlane, MO, unless it was to be stared at and generally disliked at as the only non-black, non-hispanic non-whites.

Lucky for Jimbo, he only had to visit the place at holidays, having been sent to the military academy in Virginia for the first three years post-Dental incident and then having elected to go to college and then enlist in the Army as an officer. He'd been at Al Assad, Iraq for eleven months. Back stateside at Fort Benning for a year now, Jimbo was scheduled to get out of the military before June. His unit, he'd found out two weeks before his visit to New Smyrna, was deploying back to Iraq in July. What he was going to do about this he didn't know and was trying, quite frankly, not to think about. Instead, he had spent the two weeks trying to think of ways to excuse himself from coming to New Smyrna.

Unsuccessfully. He tried to put up some obstacles over the phone to his mom a couple of times—they were going to be on a training mission (lie), they were being visited by the battalion commander for inspection (lie 2), but his mother knew more about his platoon's schedule than he did, thanks to the family-friendly website some jackass had started when they had been overseas.

"You don't want to come," his mother had said.

"It's not that. Not everything gets put on the website ma. Ma, come on."

"Battalion Commander in Afghanistan now. Why you don't want come home?"

Jesus, how did she know these things? Was she hacking into the Pentagon? "Okay, okay...I'll see what I can do. I'll see."

It wasn't fair. The only reason his parents were in New Smyrna was because they'd sued the crap out of Fairlane, MO for breaking Jimbo's arms. This had made them rich and able to move to the ocean.

In honor of his visit, his mother had cooked Jimbo's least favorite dish: a flounder steamed to a gelatinous texture and smothered in cloying, gingery sauce. It was his father's second favorite dish, which was of course the real reason it was being served.

"You like," his mother assured him as they sat down at the table on the second floor of their house overlooking the bay. A dark bird hung in the sky over the water, fluttering its wings to hold it in place while it looked for careless fish wallowing near the surface. "You always like."

The fish was on a tray that was shaped and painted like a fish. In another dish there were mushrooms, like a heap of steaming rubber bands, and a third contained white rice.

When his parents were in bed, he snuck out, got into his Mustang and drove off.

"Aha!" His father, who had been sitting at the table for the last half-hour, reading his paper and waiting for the food, clapped his hands together. "You favorite!"

"Enough." Jimbo stood and looked down at his parents bewildered faces. Exhilaration gusted through him. "It's not my favorite. It's Dad's second favorite, but you don't have the

decency to acknowledge that, you don't even have the decency to serve me something I like when I'm home, so you make me pretend I like this shit so it feels like a celebration. Well, it's not. I'm not celebrating—not with this crap. You want to celebrate, get me my favorite. Otherwise, I'm

outta here." He turned his back on the shocked table and strode to the door.

Of course this could never happen, but man, did Jimbo ever want it to. Instead, he slid as much of the slimy meal past his gag reflex as he could, excused himself from the table and went to his room. When his parents were in bed, he snuck out, got into his Mustang and drove off, settling for a, "Fuck you," to them a half mile down the road. Even then he'd whispered it and not felt perfectly safe.

Jimbo and the woman who turned out to be named Dina were the only two people in the bar who were both: a) under fifty-five and/or b) not dressing and living from a Jimmy Buffet song. Dina was tall and blonde and skinny and had pulled up to the bar next to Jimbo and said, "I hate it here." She'd then looked at Jimbo, crew cut and dressed in Kenneth Cole everything, not to mention Chinese, and said, "You must *really* hate it here." After that, she'd asked him questions like "What's it like to be Chinese, I mean, as opposed to Japanese?" and, "Do you have a motorcycle? Oh you don't? Oh, I think they're sexy except that most people who have them are ugly and they might be stupid."

When she found out that Jimbo was in the Army she said, "I'd ask you what it's like but that's like asking what's Alaska like." She lived in Seattle, she was staying at her parent's house while her parents weren't there. She was having a party at her parent's house later that night. This annoyed Jimbo because after eleven months of commanding a Hum-vee platoon patrolling Uranium South, he felt like a party at somebody's parents' house was a step in the wrong direction. Going home to his own parents' house, however, where there was definitely *not* a party, was a step in the really, really wrong direction. Dina excused herself after a couple of hours to buy booze, gave Jimbo the address and told him to show up at midnight. "I don't guarantee anything. People are generally boring. I can't do anything about that."

Jimbo stayed in the bar until it was one o'clock, then went to the party. Dina's parents' house was across the street from the beach, which didn't really count for much at one o'clock in the morning.

The house had a pool table and a wet bar, all in a big room on the ground floor. Otherwise there were clumps of chubby

white furniture here and there, and beds. The place seemed uninhabited to Jimbo in the way a hotel seems uninhabited. There were at least twenty people around Jimbo's age there, which was eighteen more than he'd seen in New Smyrna at that point. There was also an old guy sitting at the wet bar near one end of the pool table. He looked like he should have a patch and be named Dead-Eye.

"You have to meet someone," Dina said when Jimbo had been there for a half-hour.

It was almost two by then and raining like a car wash outside. Dina took Jimbo's arm and led him to the pool table. Some people were sitting on the clump of chubby furniture nearby and a guy and a girl were unenthusiastically clicking the balls around the green felt. "Hi Grandpa," Dina said, explaining who the old man was, then pulled Jimbo over to the girl playing pool. The girl was wearing a green dress that articulated her boobs pleasantly. Her hair was a box of perfect curls set carefully around her nearly circular face. She looked fresh and clean and as though she had been kept in a cupboard somewhere and only brought out for this special occasion.

"Jimbo-Hannah-Hannah-Jimbo. I think you two should hook up because then at least something not boring will happen tonight. You're cute together. Jimbo's Chinese, not Japanese, if you believe what he says, and he's an Army-man. Hannah is just Hannah. Now you can talk and tell me what happened later on." Dina then went over to the clump of furniture and threw herself down in the middle of the group saying, "Somebody do something funny."

"Okay," Jimbo said to Hannah. Hannah had a pool cue that she was leaning on. She put one hand near the flat side of Jimbo's haircut.

"So you're in the Army? What's that like? Dina's such a trip."

Jimbo had enlisted after college because he couldn't figure out what else to do. Then the war had started, and he'd had plenty to do. He never said this to anyone. Instead, he pulled himself up into Staunton Military Academy muster posture and saluted.

She busted a big grin and Jimbo could see she wasn't beautiful but he could also see how cute she was, all ringlets and dimples.

"Oh my GOD!"

She started out just saying it but ended up yelling in a way that, by the end of the night, didn't make Jimbo nervous.

"So did you end up sleeping together? Don't tell me because that's just gross. No, tell me. No—don't give me details. That's just gross."

Dina and Jimbo were back in a bar that, for all intents and purposes, could have been the same bar they'd met in the day before but wasn't. This bar was a converted garage with one wall open to the strip mall across the street. It was open mic night and some guy who looked like Jimmy Buffet was singing a version of "Tequila Sunrise," which seemed to have been going on since the beginning of time, even though Dina and Jimbo were sitting outside, around the corner and

behind five big potted plants. They were drinking beers so they wouldn't feel like they were drinking so much, but then they were having a shot of Jagermeister every now and then.

Jimbo hadn't been home since the party the night before. At the party Jimbo and Hannah had played exactly three games of pool, drank five shots of tequila at the wet bar—three of them with Dina's grandpa, whose name wasn't Dead-Eye but was Chauncey.

Dina had disappeared and never reappeared, so Hannah and Jimbo had gone back to a place that Hannah called "the guest suite," which was a boat with four bedrooms, a living room, another wet bar and another pool table. Wet bars and pool tables were, it seemed, the "it" thing in New Smyrna, which was undoubtedly why Jimbo's parents didn't have them. The boat was moored under the bridge that went over the river, both of which had names that, as part of his dislike for New Smyrna, Jimbo refused to remember.

"You live here?" Jimbo had asked, rapping his knuckles against the wet bar. The floor was carpeted and didn't thump at all in the way you'd expect a boat floor to thump. Everything seemed very normal and dry-land about the place once you were inside.

"No," Hannah had said. "Oh my GOD! It's just my dad's boat."

They'd played exactly one and a third more games of pool on the boat, had another two shots of tequila and then when Hannah was shooting at the '3' ball, Jimbo put his hand up her dress. They'd been kissing and pushing against each other at intervals since they'd gotten on the boat, with the music up loud enough to mask some of the feeling of being with a stranger, but until that moment, until Jimbo slipped his hand up the back of her thigh, pushing the slinky fabric back so that her butt appeared – which was as round and firm and alive as the rest of her – until that moment anything could have happened.

"Oh my GOD!" Hannah had said, and laughed explosively, but she'd gone ahead and sunk the '3' ball and not stopped Jimbo. Then they'd made it like that, bent over the pool table, then they'd made it lying down on the pool table, then again at the bar while they had another shot, then in the hallway, then in the bedroom—on the floor, on the bed and then on the floor again. The boat didn't rock even the slightest bit for all of their making it.

"No," he said to Dina, who was eating all of the garnishes out of his drink. "We didn't." There was a slice of pineapple, a maraschino cherry and then another slice of pineapple on a toothpick. Jimbo regretted giving up the maraschino cherry, but didn't say anything about it.

"That was a test," Dina said. "And it worked because I know you slept with her and now I know what kind of person you are. She told me. You thought she wouldn't tell me but that's because you're the kind of person I now know you to be."

Hannah had asked him again that the morning while they were lying in bed, "What was it like?"

He had kissed her, and not told her that two hours ago he'd woken up and seen her asleep next to him in the monogrammed sheets, with her small thumbs tucked into her small fists and her curls spilling out of the perfect box they had been in the night before onto the pillow and across her cheeks and her eyes closed and her mouth just a little open and not smiling for the first time he could remember since they'd met and he'd realized that he'd been wrong about her, that she wasn't cute, that cute had been something else, maybe something she put on or something that came over her, or something she needed; that she was actually beautiful and maybe a little sad and much, much stronger than she seemed when she was under the influence of cuteness. And something had passed through him when he saw that, maybe a cold, rainy gust, or maybe something more animal and unpredictable, and he'd thought, *She's not safe.*

Instead, when she asked him again, "What was it like?" he'd said, "Not like this," and started rushing his hands up and down her body

He'd spent the day alone. After leaving Hannah on the boat to have lunch with her parents who were showing up from Daytona for the day, he'd driven down the coast in his Mustang not thinking about Al Assad. There was a lot to not think about, which is why he'd gone as far as Vero Beach and then back.

He'd met up with Dina when he'd gotten back to New Smyrna in time for happy hour. A skeletal, leathery, bleached woman walked past with long, splay-toed feet gripping unpleasantly at a pair of flip-flops. Her cutoffs curled up in that denim-y way so that her underwear showed. Or maybe it was her bikini bottoms. For some reason this became an important distinction to Jimbo, in spite of the fact that her toes made him feel a little sick.

"Snap-snap, pay attention," Dina said. "She's gross. Look at her feet."

Jimbo shrugged and made a non-committal expression with his mouth. It wasn't as much fun to agree with Dina even when he agreed with Dina.

"So, do you love her? Are you going to see her again? Are you going to have babies? Babies freak me out—little sucking things."

"Oh my god," Jimbo said, catching himself in time to hear himself saying it but not in time to stop himself. Dina made a noise like a monkey or the first part of a firework and stuck her eyes out at him.

"You said that!" She somehow said this without it being louder than normal, but being like a yell anyway.

"She doesn't own the words," Jimbo said, but he knew he was wrong. Hannah did own them, and he was borrowing them.

The guy playing "Tequila Sunrise" finally finished and said "Thank YOU!" to what sounded like three people clapping

She was actually beautiful and maybe a little sad and much much stronger than she seemed.

and whooping in cracked, living-on-a-desert-island voices. It went quiet for a while, during which interval Dina continued talking about something that Jimbo wasn't listening to because he was thinking back to the worst day he'd had in Al Assad, the day when he'd eaten something or drank something that had wrung his bowels inside out for 12 hours

straight, starting with his puking at muster and continuing through his lying on his rack in his room all day long after the company captain had relieved him of duty.

But that hadn't been the bad part of the day. The bad part had been that he'd missed being on patrol that day, escorting a convoy of civilian semis down to Little Baghdadi, and that he'd missed sitting command in his Humvee, and that he'd missed the IED that had blown his Humvee up, and that he'd missed dying with his driver and gunner when the secondary IED had detonated, that he'd missed Corporal Angeles being torn in half up the middle like a shared sheet of paper, and he'd missed Sergeant Lambert's arm and leg being blown off so he bled out in less than a minute. The bad part was that he had missed all of that, and that there never had been and never would be a way for him to go back and retrieve these things. And he was thinking about this because he was, in that moment, knowing that there was no way back to what he'd missed, not in Hannah's eyes or in her pussy, not in the beer and Jagermeister he was drinking with the efficiency of a machine, not in hilarity of Dina, in the million miles of black asphalt highway that criss-crossed the country under the tires of his Mustang, certainly not in the brittle company of his expectant, disappointed, displaced parents.

Which was how he knew, at that moment, that he would be going back to Iraq in July, when his unit re-deployed, even though it was a month after he was supposed to get out.

"Well, that's decided," he thought, then looked at Dina's drunk-startled-amused face and knew he'd said it out loud as well.

"What's decided, you weirdo?" Dina was chewing the straw that had been on the table when they'd sat down for those many hours before.

Jimbo shook his head and smiled. "You lost me."

"I lost you? Listen here shell-shock boy."

"Let's have another shot." Suddenly Jimbo was very thirsty.

"Oh, that's a *great* idea." Dina ordered four more shots from the passing waitress—who turned out to be the wizened chick

with the splay toes—then turned back to Jimbo and assumed a "Now what the hell is going to happen?" expression.

Inside, the next open-miker plunked and wheedled into a version of "Night Moves."

"We have to get really drunk so we can go get all-night breakfast," Dina said.

Then Hannah showed up. Jimbo and Dina were pretty close to hammered, and Hannah was with a couple of guys who looked not that psyched to have other people around. Luckily Hannah was about as close to hammered as Jimbo and Dina—"Oh my GOD, it's you guys,"—and the two guys weren't, which gave Jimbo and Dina the advantage. So even though the two guys were both typically blond and typically tall and typically shaped and even though they both had a certain typical attitude about them that they could and maybe did own a thing once they'd looked at it, in spite of this they just stood next to the table where Jimbo and Dina were sitting for a while, muttering to each other, and then they decided to leave. They tried to leave in a certain way. They tried to leave in a way that made everyone else feel irrelevant, and it might have worked if Dina hadn't said to them as they were haughtily sauntering across the parking lot, "Goodnight boykinses. You're very blond and that's good work." And then she'd whispered to Hannah and Jimbo, "Shhh. I'm blond too. I think it's time that you knew that about me."

And everything would have been fine if Jimbo hadn't at that moment, said in his lieutenant's voice, which was loud and flat and didn't give a shit about anything, "Nice to meet you gentlemen." This made them stop at the end of the parking lot and turn around, both of them rotating inward toward each other and then toward Jimbo. Jimbo waved. "Let's do it again sometime."

They both raised their arms in a subtle bicep flexing maneuver, and seemed to consult with one another without actually saying anything.

"It's okay," Dina said.

"Oh my god," Hannah said.

"The threat of violence is a form of violence itself." Jimbo had learned this in Officer Training though this was the first time he'd ever said it in a loud, assertive tone.

"Cumov'r here." He couldn't tell which one of them had said it, but whoever had said it made it sound like a single word.

"Don't," said Dina.

"Oh my god," said Hannah.

But Jimbo was already there, feeling like a car salesman approaching a mark, hands open and a big, toothy smile on his face. "Gentlemen," he said, and was stopped short by one of them hitting him in the stomach and the other bashing the back of his neck as he bent over, so he ended up on his knees. He just stayed that way, as it seemed like this might be the best way to put an end to things.

"Fuckin' stop it. Fuckin' knock it off." Dina was yelling but was still at the table, now standing of course. The two guys stayed over Jimbo for a little while until one of them spit next to him and said, "Fuckin' defend yourself freak."

Then they left and Jimbo got up and went back to the table.

"I'm fine. It wasn't a big deal. They didn't hit me that hard."

Dina was cussing out the two guys and Hannah was saying some other things about how she knew them and

that they had bad reputations but that she'd never seen them act like this until now. Jimbo just wanted the event to be over and for things to go back to what they had been before, so after a few minutes he got up pretending to go to the bathroom but ended up standing right in front of the little stage in the back of the bar watching a wizened leftover of a man with dried whiskers and gathers of extra skin around his Adam's apple and elbows putting his Yamaha guitar away. He'd sung three Kenny Rogers songs and, though he'd sounded a little parched in the throat, he hadn't been too bad. Jimbo should have been wondering what the hell he was doing standing there in front of the stage but he was blotto. He said, "That was great. Hold 'em and fold 'em. Fuckin' great."

"Nobody fuckin' listens anymore," Leftover said without turning around. Instead he bent his head upward to look at the spot where, had this been a church, some saint or other would have been hanging. Instead of a saint, however, there was a stuffed alligator head.

"I fuckin' love Kenny Rogers," said Jimbo. This wasn't true.

"He's a great American," Leftover said. This may or may not have been true.

The next thing anyone knew, Leftover was sitting at the bar and sipping at a double Ballantine's that Jimbo had bought him while Jimbo tuned up the Yamaha and then stepped to the mic and said, "Fanks for 'avin' me back 'ere at the Imperial Ballroom."

Dina and Hannah peered around the five potted plants with expressions like they were waiting for an explosion. "Stop it," Dina yelled, by which she meant to encourage him. Hannah just stared and said something which Jimbo couldn't hear but he had a decent idea of.

"It's loik this then," Jimbo said, and then he started singing and, just like any other open mic night, everybody stopped listening. Everybody except Dina who stood at the back of the room and put first one hand on her chin and over her mouth, and then the other, and then switched it back again; and Hannah who was looking straight at Jimbo when he sang, "I know this world is killing you." When he finished the two girls laughed and clapped and Jimbo went to the bathroom finally, and when he came back Dina said to him, "You should never do that again because it's not something normal people do. Did you learn to sing in prison?"

Under the table Hannah was holding his hand while over the table she was being quiet, which Jimbo was listening to even more closely than he was listening to Dina say, "Do you think you're being sneaky? I'm an expert at reading angles and I can tell you're holding hands and I have to say that, stars of track and field though you are, it disgusts me and I might need to vomit actually on you."

"Oh my GOD!" Hannah had predictably responded, and let go of Jimbo's hand so the spell was broken, but only sort of because she replaced it with her knee against his. Dina chose not to make a fuss about this but instead ordered them three more shots of Jagermeister and said, "Let's all get up there and sing now, but let's do it with bags over our

heads so no one will recognize us but everyone will remember us because that's the best way to go through life."

After a while they skipped all-night breakfast and went back to Hannah's dad's boat—all three of them—where Hannah and Jimbo made it some more and Dina called her friends in Seattle.

The next morning they were eating pickles, tortilla chips and Nutella and not the sardines which were the only other item in the pantry in the boat's galley kitchen when Dina reminded them that Jimbo had asked Hannah to come to dinner that night. They had all forgotten, or at least Jimbo had.

"So, you're going to meet Jimbo's parents? They're Chinese, if I know anything about the way these things work."

Tonight was to be the ceremonial buffet extravaganza, which was to take place at The Rusty Scupper's five o'clock all you can eat shrimp. Jimbo's father loved shrimp above all things, even gelatinous steamed flounder, and his mother didn't mind them so much. Jimbo wasn't a fan, but that clearly didn't matter. This was a celebration of his coming home, and so they were eating what his father liked most.

"So, are you really going to go? What does it mean that you're going to a buffet with Jimbo's parents? What if it was a la carte? Or potluck? But you understand the gist of the question. Go ahead now—you have the floor."

Hannah's eyes had been growing larger as Dina spoke, and seemingly heavier because they were dropping down to the floor. Jimbo avoided noticing this by first putting Nutella on a tortilla chip, which was pretty good, and then putting it on a pickle, which was horrible. It was an effective strategy.

"Oh my GOD!" Hannah said. Dina, who looked like her blond hair had been blown vigorously in several directions and then tied back by a five year-old, shouted, "JESUS, you're PREGNANT!" Hannah said, "Oh my GOD!" again, and then the incident had passed and Dina did not mention the buffet again.

It's a whole new world, Jimbo was thinking. *A whole new world*. He was finally driving his Mustang back to his parents' house. He would be picking Hannah up at 4:30 for the shrimp extravaganza and feeling pretty good about it. This was part of the Whole New World. It was, in fact, central to the Whole New World. It was like the finger that the balloon is tied to, the one that makes it dance and keeps it from floating away.

He'd left a note for his parents when he'd gone out, saying that he'd be out late, but he hadn't said he would be out for two days. He turned his cellphone on for the first time in he didn't know how long, saw that there were thirty-some messages, then turned it off again. The balloon kept dancing along.

His parents' house was one of the boxes that lined the bay, greedily consuming the view like fat guys at an eating contest. By the time Jimbo opened the front door, some of the commotion had died away, so that all he heard was

his father upstairs saying into the phone, "Thank you very much. We are sorry to inconvenience you. Goodbye."

Jimbo thought, *Inconvenience. Inconvenience*. He took his jacket off slowly in the front hallway, allowing his mother time to come flowing through the door from the living room like a whole crowd of weeping women, flowing in and saying, "Jimbo, Jimbo, Jimbo," again and again. She wrapped her arms around him and even though she was a small woman with small arms, they went all the way around him.

"Ma," Jimbo said, and tried to feel something. Anything. He tried to remember what it felt like to feel. But that didn't work because at that moment his father appeared at the top of the stairs in his pajamas even though it was well past noon. He stooped down like he might have been preparing to sit on the toilet, but he didn't sit—he just held that position and looked at Jimbo with an expression that condensed 5,000 years of disappointment into ten seconds, which was long enough for Jimbo to think *It's a WHOLE NEW WORLD*, two more times. Then his father said, "We thought you were dead," and disappeared.

And then Jimbo knew that it wasn't a Whole New World. He knew, in fact, that it was the same old place and that there was maybe nothing that was going to change that ever again. There was no balloon and no finger and there was certainly no dancing.

He didn't pick Hannah up to go to the buffet that afternoon and he didn't pick his phone up when she called that night, and when he drove out the next day on his way back to Georgia, he didn't call her, because he knew that, in the same old place, which was the only world Jimbo would ever occupy, there were things that could never be understood by someone like Hannah, that weren't understood by Jimbo himself, though he'd grown to accept them in the way that one grows to accept that one is missing an eye, or a hand. Or Angeles. Or Lambert. Or just twelve hours.

And a month later, when he got a text message on his phone from Dina on Monday that said, "i hate you right now because of the things you do," and then another on Tuesday that said, "i forgive you because you're insane and insanity is considered a legitimate defense but i never want to talk to you again," he sat down on the rack in his apartment in Columbus, GA, and stared out the room window at the slanted, unexciting street two floors below, at the stealthy up-and-down creep of grayish-green, grayish-red, grayish-blue and grayish-black automobiles, as though there was a secret somewhere at the edge of town that needed to be retrieved, and he thought, "She never would have gotten me."

And he thought this until his arms began to ache just above his elbows and below his shoulders. Then he went out for pizza, consoling himself with the understanding that soon he would be back on the long, cracked and crushed spine of Uranium South, and that everyone makes mistakes, and that in a week, he would be just another one of Hannah's. □

CAROLYNE WRIGHT

Assassin's Alphabet

*an abecedarian**"Voici le temps des Assassins."*

—A. Rimbaud

Assassins don't always recognize their time.
Ask any poet: *We have to murder our*

beloveds, they say. But they mean beloved
bad lines, not the hopes of lovers. Is that why you

came to my bed? You: two-timer and time-
consumer, heart's panderer and passion-slave.

Damn yo' eyes, Billie Holliday moaned as you
dove into my bluesy chamber and

echo-cleft, butterfly backstroke in my river of
ecstasy where the sun don't shine. "You've fallen

fast," you had the nerve to say, after you
fought your way to the surface, your breath

guilt's ragged gasps, our bodies' consensual momentum
giving you pleasure as if it were mutual.

Hey lady! you'd challenged me. *Don't we*
have bigger kites to fly? "Sorry, my

insidious metaphors. I just wanted to get
inside you," you admitted as we lay naked in a

jumble of blankets and mingled sweat, one night before
"Julie" invited you to the beach. "I didn't

know," you said, "how much I'd fall for her. She
knocked on my door, I ran with it from there."

Love can't be willed, you shrugged. Crying me
love in all the body's languages, you'd

moaned *Oh baby* at the apex of your come, beg song for
my *transcendent loving*. Binomial emotions

nights on your back arching into me, mornings we
negotiated our way into the hurry sundown

of our clothes. You earned your degree in
oblivion, and our affair eased into the past

perfect tense. "It isn't perfect, and it isn't
past," I said, as you clung to me our last morning to

quell your regrets. Outside, mockingbirds cried
questions: What if you'd never locked your bicycle to the

railing of my veranda? How could we sit on
riverside steps that evening, as you

said you'd return to her bed that weekend? I didn't
slip my hand from yours. What about your genital

tendency to linger? Our last night, I joked I had
to put a Statue of Limitations by the bed to

underscore how long you had to decide between
us. That week we missed the celestial palimpsest of

Venus and Mars, our disputes occluded
Venus de Milo's armless reach. I said "I

want you for all the right reasons. I
want you. I'm not going to soften the blow." Now, I

X-out your tongue's flutter from between my thighs,
X's in your eyes as you organize

your day to avoid me. As if my affection had damaged
you. Or my woman's foolish tendency to

zoom in on the heart: the infinite power of
zero—distance your *divided self* could love.

Greetings from Duluth

B. J. HOLLARS

WE DRIVE TO DULUTH IN THE MORNING so the kid can sleep in the car. It's mostly a straight shot, 150 miles north of our Wisconsin home on U.S. 53. The landscape is speckled with red barns and brown cows and rural wilderness—all of which we blur past at 70 miles per hour. First we blur through Bloomer, then Sarona, then Spooner, eventually making it to Superior ("Living Up To Our Name" claims the WELCOME sign) before crossing the bridge into Duluth.

My wife and I have never been here before, though we've heard all about it.

The great little port city on beautiful Lake Superior.

Vacationland, U.S.A.

However, I know it also for its lynchings. How on June 15, 1920, a mob of Minnesotans at least 5000 strong left three black circus workers to hang from a lamppost. Perhaps this is not common knowledge for the average Duluth-bound vacationer, though while writing a book about southern lynchings my research regularly led me north to Duluth.

The city is known also for its aerial lift bridge, and as I soon learn, locals much prefer chatting about this engineering feat than the social engineering of their lynch mob. First constructed in 1905, the bridge lifts skyward, allowing ships to pass beneath it and into the great lake. It is no drawbridge, but an actual lift, the entire bridge held horizontal as it hums upward in one piece. This, we soon discover, is the cause of the traffic jam on Lake Street, our car halted alongside dozens more while the bridge lifts just out of sight. We are spectators unaware of the show until after the ship passes, the bridge returns to its place, and we continue on toward the beach.

The kid is up now (our dog, too, has grown restless), and we've hardly parked the car along the beachfront when my wife and I find ourselves loaded down with baby carrier and dog, as well as various other provisions dangling from our elbows, arms, and necks. We set up camp just a few feet from the

water's edge, though the soothing sound of the waves is soon overpowered by the dog's bark, the kid's cry.

"Take a picture," my wife shouts, and while this scene hardly seems worth remembering, I follow orders.

We calm the troops long enough to fit them into frame.

"Smi-ile."

They don't.

THE PEOPLE OF DULUTH HAVE LONG KNOWN not to wait for a smile.

On the night Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie were lynched, Ralph Greenspun, a photographer from nearby Superior, waited with his camera as a crowd of well-dressed white men assembled for a photo to commemorate their crimes.

The photograph that resulted—perhaps no more shocking than any other lynching photo from the era—depicts exactly what one might expect: two black men stripped at the waist and hanging from a lamppost, while the third man (already hanged) lays facedown on the ground.

Yet of far greater interest than the intended focus of the photo are the white men on the periphery—a wide spectrum of emotions plastered against their pale faces. Some appear somber, others ebullient, and some look simply surprised. Dressed in their suit coats and Sunday best, they form a ring around the bodies. Not one of them looks away from the camera, but instead, stares directly at it, as if daring someone to judge them for their deed.

Of the many psychological questions—most of all, how seemingly ordinary, respectable men (the grocer, the barber, the mailman) could perform such an act—the Duluth photo manages to reframe the question in more personal terms.

How, I wonder as I stare at them, could you tie your neckties one moment, and then, in the next, tie a noose?

AS WE STUMBLE OUR WAY INTO THE MOTEL room, it soon becomes clear that much of the

beach has come with us. The sand has taken refuge in our flip-flops, swimsuit liners, the kid's diaper. Thankfully, this is no four-star hotel. While we were initially disappointed by its location several blocks up from the shore, quite fortuitously, it's well within walking distance of the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial—a tribute erected in 2003 to honor the lynching victims. Upon learning of our close proximity we gather the troops once more, pushing the stroller past the old public library and the abandoned high school until spotting the memorial on the corner of First Street and Second Avenue East, just across the street from the site of the lynching.

The memorial is simple yet affecting, a brick-laid plot of land with three nondescript silhouettes plastered against a wall, alongside quotations from King, Einstein, Wilde, Baldwin, among others. The Elie Wiesel quotation hits me the hardest:

"There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest."

Of course, I've failed many times, witnessing one minor transgression or another—a kicked dog, a daddy longlegs with its legs plucked—though these instances pale in comparison to the thousands of lynching victims who died not only by ropes, but by silence. It's far easier, when in the midst of a mob, to bite one's tongue than speak out, to ordain oneself a spectator than a passive participant.

At around 11:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 15, 1920, as thousands crowded the street for the spectacle soon to come, few men bothered to protest at all. One affable, Irish-born priest, Father P.J. Maloney, reportedly infiltrated the crowd, seeking out familiar faces and shaming them to return to their homes. Another, Reverend William Powers of Sacred Heart Cathedral, spoke louder still, standing up to the mob in its entirety, and risking his life in the process.

"I know this crime is the most horrible one," cried the priest, "but let the law take its course."

The mob refused, and as Powers made one final attempt to attach himself to McGhie, the mob overpowered him.

"God be with me," McGhie cried as the rope pulled tight around his neck. "I'm not the right man."

For many in the crowd that night, right and wrong were relative terms.

By morning, the ramifications of the mob's actions became clear, and those who hadn't taken part began damning those who did.

The *New York Times* offered a particularly scathing rebuke, noting that the only difference between racial violence in the North and South was that at least in the North there was a chance the perpetrators might be brought to justice. "Even that is a dubious likelihood," the editorial continued, "and certainly nothing like all of the 5,000 inhabitants of Duluth who took some part in this lynching will pay any penalty for what they did, though they are all as guilty, morally, as those who pulled the avenging ropes."

The criticism came from closer to home as well, locals deeming it a "horrible tragedy" and "a deadly blow to virtue," leaving me to wonder where all these outspoken critics had been the previous night. In the Wednesday morning edition of *The Duluth Herald*, the Kiwanis Club, too, had little trouble characterizing the lynching as "disgraceful, barbaric and criminal," but had not a single club member found himself in a position to make an effort to prevent it?

Within days, Duluth's African-American community banded together to release their own resolution, condemning the lynchings "with all the odium at our command." African-Americans in Duluth had always "stood for law and order," the resolution reminded the city's white citizens, "and now stand ready to lend every honorable effort in helping to maintain the same . . ."

In a letter to *The Duluth Herald*, local Samuel Gross compared the lawlessness to "the darkest days of Russian autocracy," adding, "[t]here is no way in which our city can erase the terrible blot impressed upon its fair name by the unspeakable excesses of last night's mob."

But at the outset, it seemed as if the town had little interest in erasing its terrible blot.

After all, they had a photo to remember it by.

THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON WE CRUISE the boardwalk, take the photo, drink iced tea from a can. This, we think, fulfills our obligation as tourists. We people watch, dog watch, watch a ship pass beneath a bridge. We meander to the nearby lighthouse and snap a photo there as well, then another alongside the lake. No one anywhere is talking about the lynching. This part of the city is reserved for overflowing ice-cream cones and souvenir stores, and we, too, are momentarily smitten. We browse through the kitschy shops, fingering through the wire spinners and selecting five postcards for a buck.

Just days after the lynching, Greenspun's photograph made for the most popular postcard in town. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to send greetings from Duluth.

The phenomenon of lynching postcards hardly began in the small northern town, but, in fact, had long proved a profitable enterprise for any photographer bold enough to capture the shot. It was a macabre trade, one that allowed the spectacle to be replayed again and again, passing from one town to another through the U.S. postal service.

Leon Litwack, co-editor for *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, reports Tennessean Thomas Brooks' remembrances of a lynching that occurred in 1915. According to Brooks, "kodaks clicked all morning at the scene of the lynching. . .," the photographs soon becoming so popular that the photographers "installed a portable printing plant at the bridge and reaped a harvest in selling postcards showing a photograph of the lynched Negro."

Yet according to *Lynching Photographs* co-editor Shawn Michelle Smith, the photographs and postcards were worth more than money; they also revealed insight into the flux of history, how the postcards' "meaning changes over time and according to who is viewing and to what ends."

Surely the antique dealers will understand this, I convince myself as I walk from shop to shop inquiring about the postcard.

Upon entering the first antique store, I'm greeted by an elderly woman, who, on learning of my interest in postcards, cheerily hobbles past the cut glass and china to share her collection with me.

"We don't have too many anymore," she admits, and when I tell her there's only one,

EDITOR LAURA JULIER

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"Intellectually
challenging, lyrically
thrilling, and always,
always surprising."

—Lia Purpura

in particular, I'm after, I wait for a tongue-lashing that does not come. She sighs instead, peering into the glass case before her and says, "I had it once, but I gave it away. I just couldn't keep it here anymore."

When entering the second antique store—this one located less than a block from the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial—I'm greeted by a gray-haired ex-hippie running numbers through an adding machine.

"What can I sell to you?" he asks, so I begin my spiel, explain to him about my search for the postcard.

"Mmm...never seen that one," he says, shaking his head and returning to his numbers. "But that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. That's how they were back then."

He appears disinclined to speak further, so I wander back over to the memorial, this time taking careful note of an unattributed quotation running along the top of the wall:

"An event has happened, upon which it is difficult to speak and impossible to remain silent."

I note the use of passive voice—"An event has happened"—rather than the far more damning active-voiced alternative: "We have taken part in an event..." The language, while well-intentioned, implies the event occurred free from human error, that it simply occurred blamelessly, nothing more than a natural phenomenon.

WE RETURN TO THE SHORES OF LAKE Superior later that evening, crossing the aerial lift bridge and enduring the five-mile drive to take in a beachside sunset. This is a luxury we can afford for one night only, which is perhaps why it is the moment we will remember most: our one fleeting instant in which we simultaneously have a calm kid and a quiet dog and a couple cans of iced tea.

The night is so perfect we try to preserve it, positioning the kid in some sea grass and snap a photo. Then, we balance him against a beach log and snap another. Then another in the sand. The click of a camera comes so easily now, and after fifteen minutes or so, we've indulged ourselves with well over a hundred frames.

It's impossible to pose a six-month-old, so I just keep clicking in the off chance we capture something good. Far more care had gone into Greenspun's photos, though even with his added effort, he'd captured nothing

good. The photographer clicked and clicked, but every exposure exposed mostly the same—men whose minds were lost in the blindness of a moment, whose deeds, while done in the dark, would linger well beyond the dawn.

"Send them pictures to Alabama," cried a man in the crowd that night. "Tell 'em to keep their niggers."

I'VE NEGLECTED TO REPORT WHAT LED these men to their deaths. Likely because it's a story you already know, one long rooted within the lynching narrative.

It goes like this:

A black man (or several) is accused of raping a white woman, prompting a mob of white men to exact justice against the "nigger."

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, this process—repeated and photographed again and again—became the go-to story employed by the mobs to justify their actions. The court system was too slow, the mob argued, and so it fell to the people to pick up the slack by picking up their ropes.

In Duluth, a 19-year-old white woman named Irene Tusken and her 18-year-old boyfriend, James Sullivan, took advantage of this narrative. Hours after the alleged rape (in which time Tusken returned home, bathed, said goodnight to her parents and fell asleep with no mention of the violent crime allegedly wrought against her), Sullivan eventually got around to telling his father of the incident. He informed his father that six black circus workers had raped Tusken after the pair watched them load cars behind the tents. According to Sullivan, he was held at gunpoint while Tusken—overwhelmed by the sexual assault—fainted.

The police were called, and African-American men were pulled from their circus cars and lined up to be identified. After walking the line, Sullivan admitted he could not select the guilty parties, though Tusken, unconscious at the time of the alleged crime, nevertheless managed to point fingers to five men. When a private investigator later asked how she had arrived at these men given her unconscious state at the time of the alleged assault, she remarked that while she did not remember their faces, she did recall "their size and physique."

In total, six men were hauled off to jail, the five Tusken identified, as well as Isaac McGhie, held as a material witness. It was a distinction that made little difference to the men who swarmed the jail later that night, grabbing McGhie alongside two others and punishing them with equal disregard for their lives.

In the aftermath, long after Greenspun preserved the many guilty faces in the crowd, few seemed willing to admit their role in the violence. Their braggadocio receded to a conspiracy of silence, one in which everyone was a spectator, though no one participated themselves. Yet mustn't someone have been responsible for wielding the rope, tying the knot, slipping it over the lamppost?

Michael Fedo, author of *The Lynchings in Duluth*, reports that at least some of these actions were the result of the mob's coaxing. As the mob pulled the men from their jail cells, a young man named Albert Johnson climbed a lamppost on the corner of First Street to have a better look. He, too, had come only as a spectator, but when the rope was unexpectedly handed to him—when he was told to pass it over the top of the lamppost—he followed orders. Of the many lampposts in the city, the hanging likely occurred at that particular post because of its proximity to the jail, but also, because Albert Johnson had decided to climb it, because a man spotted his convenient position and handed him a rope.

Similarly, following McGhie's hanging, a second rope was obtained for Elmer Jackson. As the mob decided who would tie the noose, someone spotted a spectator in a Navy uniform.

"Let the sailor tie the knot," a man called, and the sailor, too, followed orders.

His fate now sealed, Elmer Jackson pulled a pair of dice from his pocket and tossed them to the ground. "I won't need these any more in this world," he announced, the mob watching as they clattered to the street.

These men—so willing to take his life—refused to take his dice.

"Well," one man said, handing them back, "you might want to roll 'em in the next."

NINETY-TWO YEARS AND 19 DAYS LATER, I return to the spot where Jackson rolled the dice and lost. Other bets had been placed that day as well, such as Irene Tusken and

James Sullivan's gamble to blame a few black men for a crime that likely never occurred.

They won big: three men died, a town was shamed, and Greenspun turned a tidy profit.

After the kid's fast asleep, I return once more to the memorial. It's nighttime now, and while I am alone on that street corner, I try to imagine it populated by thousands. I try to imagine, also, what it might have looked like for the three black men pulled mercilessly through the crowd toward the lamppost. Tonight, all that remains are three silhouettes imprinted on the memorial wall.

Above me on the hill, I see the still-operational high school clock tower, while far below, Lake Superior holds firm on the horizon. I wonder: *Is this the view Clayton, Jackson, and McGhie last saw as the ropes were tightened around their necks? A ticking clock in one direction and eternity in the other?*

In the moments prior to his death, Elias Clayton—the third to hang—was spun through the crowd and forced to face the others' fate. The mob then raised him like a flag, Fedo describing that as he was pulled upward, "he raised his hands heavenward in a gesture of supplication before convulsing in his choking spasms."

For a moment he was above everyone, peering down at a crowd that hated him. It was a view shared by many others in places like Marion, Indiana and Elkins, West Virginia, and Marietta, Georgia. Yet Duluth, unlike so many others, publically fessed up to its transgression. An event had happened, after all, and while it was difficult to speak of, the silence was sharper still.

I return to my motel room later that night, flick on the desk lamp and reach for my postcards. Two depict the aerial bridge, while the remaining three reveal the shore.

As I consider what to report to whom, I side mostly with silence. The postcard—so constricted by size and its own history—seems the wrong medium for what I have to say. The burden is too great for a mail carrier, and the cost far exceeding a stamp.

Having a wonderful time in Duluth, I write innocuously, a great little port city on beautiful Lake Superior . . . □

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MỘNG-LAN

Flight

large metallic grey pigeons
 warm benign
 creatures
 with gentle curves
 landing taking off

 other times like sharks

 B-52 planes a friend of a friend
 flew them in Iraq

 the hospital planes like slim messengers
 from the heavens to administer the sick
 are all on duty now

 what a thrill to see planes
 land take off there is a simple physics
 to the matter an irrefutable beauty
 two large wings a tail a head
 of metal steel yet adroitly
 curved from a distance

 thunderous from above
 steel flying
 into the heavens

 at Yokota Airbase flight
 is of essence
 a plane an advancement of nature

 at night the take-off-landing lights blare green red
 Christmas lights

 any of these planes could be flying
 off to the Middle East Afghanistan Iraq
 Korea Kathmandu
 Germany Indonesia or Italy

 the planes serve mightily
 serve well
 they swerve



RACHEL MORGAN

Baptism

Witnesses curl around
 one another, as tobacco
 leaves drying in rafters.
 Their bright umbrellas
 out of place, like penny
 gum balls against the
 river's bank. Over yonder
 there are decapitated lambs,
 vandalized or eroded,
 on the headstones
 of infants and children.
 The newly baptized emerge
 from the river to the
 rain, from sinner
 to saint, neighbor to
 brethren, dust to dust.

to the east west
 north & south

tame following
 their pilot's wishes their metal noses
 serve only to direct not smell

a plane is lifted into the air
 by the propulsion underneath
 & soars

O grey airplane
 where have you been?
 in which country were you on mission?—

[Yokota Airbase, Japan 2002-2005]

CHRISTINE GELINEAU

Orbit

This poem tilts its chair back at precarious angles. This poem has committed its lines to memory, it cartwheels and backbends before it gets in the car, this poem eats at the heart of America, it has a hearty appetite for golden waves and fetid rhetoric, this poem licks down dreams for dessert, cleanses them like a mother cat, this poem is a good sport. It plays air guitar like an avenging angel, when first conceived this poem has verbs hot enough to broil a sausage on, even cooled it is too saucy for the gander. This poem has wanderlust in its genes, though it would prefer to be in sweats, and a red hat, this poem will not be confined, or confused into owning a labradoodle, this poem has its faith in instinctual designs, it piles up like late season snow and melts into raucous rivulets, a silver sorcery of peppy anthems, this poem has the jaws of a pit bull and cannon bones of steel, it gallops from one genre to the next without ever resorting to the whip, it cycles past the Whimsey Poplars humming popular whimsies. This poem is really getting somewhere. It shakes baubles and lightning strikes from its hair, downs the glass of brandied plutonium, throws back its head, and sings.

Eloise

JACOB NEWBERRY

I'M TRYING TO THINK OF YOU, IN YOUR last year, before you died at fifty, giving up all your teeth. (Dear reader: this is not a metaphor.) What was it like? Someone in the office said to you (I imagine it was the dentist, yes? A man, I presume?): *There's nothing we can do to fix them, we can make you some more as good as new* and you had always been afraid of just this. (Who wouldn't be?) And here was a dentist, a *doctor*, for god's sake, saying it's time to remove the teeth you had remaining; time for a replacement. What did you say to yourself? How long did you take to decide? Did you know right away it was the right thing (since you did, after all, do it)? Or did you take some weeks, maybe months, railing against that doctor's quick decision, drowning in your indecision? Was it, finally, a hard one to make?

I don't know how many teeth you had on that last visit, before he pulled what remained and fitted you for dentures, those permanent exhibitions of incisors that fooled no one. What did you do that morning, that last morning when you still had the few remaining teeth bequeathed to you by your mother and your father? I have to believe that the dentist would have advised (ordained?) you not to eat a thing, since he (why do I assume it was a man? because you were a woman?) would want a pristine mouth, as-clean-as-possible gums from which to empty the roots, plucked like carrots from the rotting earth. (I hope you ate something difficult that morning, like frozen raspberries, like candied apples, like sunflower seeds.) Your teeth, then—dear heaven I hope you were unconscious—set on a metal platter on the metal stand beside your head that rested on a metal chair beneath a metal lamp: do let me know, now that you've died, since I am listening: do let me know, I beg, that you weren't conscious to hear the loud *plunk* as each remaining tooth went clattering against the bowl. Or that, if you were conscious, it was a twilight

state of things (as they say), that each loud echo of your rooted tooth against the steel tray was, in that moment, the sound of something distant, unrelated: land mines in the Korea of your childhood memory's war, the news set to repeat each hour in black and white the treachery of the enemy, of an uncle sent to defend against communism's relentless forward marching. Or that in your twilight state (again, I'm repeating) you heard those teeth clattering against the silver-colored moon-shaped bowl like heavy stones into a waiting lake; depth and blackness and transgression superimposed upon an image of tranquility.

Because what I don't want to think of is this: of you, awaking, stitched gums and the surgeon's back to you, for you've awoken two minutes too soon, and he's not there to guide you. You've awoken too soon (in this, my nightmare scene) and you see that he's distracted, and you know what all's transpired, and that he wouldn't want you to feel around your mouth with your still-to-some-degree-numbed tongue, and yet here you are, and so you do. You pass it across the edges of what remains of that cavity (where once you ate *apples!* to think!) but you can feel only with the tip of it, the rest of your tongue like a flat wet piece of lumber tumbling through the openness of your newborn's mouth: and what remains is a smooth, pierced emptiness. Your mouth, a wet riverbed of memory, patched and unpatched by the carpenter's hand, each divot a signal of his handiwork and of your loss. Here was the side where you had chewed your wedding cake; here was the side where you had nursed your mother's swollen breast; here was the side where you had sipped in celebration that champagne when you learned the adoption had gone through, your husband holding back his tears and his angry fists while your few friends in the Kansas October evening cheered your good news: for you

would have a son brought to you as on the river, a son brought to you as through the benevolence of the sparrows in the late hours of twilight (who would claim it was a *stork!* of all the ungraceful birds), a son brought to you as through the great giving spirit of the Lord God himself, in whom you trusted, and in whom you would entrust your son once you met my mother and she convinced you that this was a dedication commensurate with the occasion. For you had met her—my mother, mother to my consciousness, not yet born—and she was something of a friend and something of an enemy, only neither of you knew this yet, both of you believing you were sisters in a cause of rearing; for you were celebrating, she of the three children, you of the coming one, all of you children of the Kansas winter whose nights with stars shone like deep blue blackness in the winter before I was born. Believe me: you've died and I remember the winter before I was born. Simple, you see? I was a *glimmer*, as they say, in someone's eye, and your son, he (my brother?) was a glimmer in your own; and yet neither of us was alive to know this hour of glimmering, this long October of your joy and my mother's sweet defeat, her recognition that hers wouldn't be the only knee on which her child would set itself.

Because I loved you. You knew that, and your knowing this sets me free sometimes. I think of that last year, of your turning fifty without a single tooth that god (name him as you will) had given you, and I was a continent away, your dying breath like silent meteors in a separate system, like comets in a different solar order: for I didn't know you were dying, and I was gone, and you were gone, and all our memories passed on.

So let me tell you this: I'm growing sunflowers on my deck. It's summer, and they're blooming now. Tonight I'll steal all their seeds and eat them, one by one. □

The God Creators

STEVEN MOORE

WE WERE AT A BASEMENT SHOW IN TOWN. The room was mostly dark except for a cord of white light that ran over the carpet near the band. Their sound made it blink and pulse in rhythm like fancy stadium lights. Andy's basement was narrow and we'd been there before, a lot, escaping the rest of town. Along one of the room's longer sides kids sat crunched together on a couch. Another couch stretched across the middle of the room facing the band. Kids hurried over each other's crossed legs and packed onto the floor or leaned against walls. They sat on an old pirate-looking trunk Andy and I once used to spread our superhero trading cards. They sat two per recliner with someone else leaning against the back, their forearms crossed over the headrest. The short end of the room opposite the band snuck off into a staircase that ran parallel the length of the basement. People stood in the open space between the railing and the ceiling, peering from the edge. Only a few people were drunk and they kept it to themselves.

The band was two guitars, one bass, a violin, keys, and drums. They were called The God Creators. The violin was soft except for one section where it was important and the other instruments let it be important. I couldn't really hear the bass. Andy played his guitar with a bow sometimes. No one sang. I waited for words anyway. A handwritten copy of the set list lay on the computer desk next to the pirate trunk. I held the paper close to my face in the dark and the first song was called "The Battlefield Never Loses," Parts I, II, and III. The title was good and mysterious, its division into pieces good and artistic. Everything I didn't understand I categorized as *Art* so as not to reveal myself as uncultured.

The keyboardist had long black hair that drooped past his face, his eyes trained on the keys. His head bobbed but his hair always hid his face. Andy's brother Lee played guitar also. Lee was a bigger guy than Andy as of recent, reserved and deliberate. The

drummer I didn't know well but his brother, Cyclops, I met once at a dark smoke-filled cabin in a part of the Iowa countryside I could never find again. The bassist I only knew from the school's improv team. I knew he could be counted on to play the maniac with the wild, expressive personality that guaranteed laughs from the audience and the judges. He looked serious behind his instrument, like he was focused on the thing and also focused on being serious. The girl on violin was our friend Michelle whose family was rich and lived alongside the second fairway and therefore desired their daughter to master violin. She sometimes did not play her violin with a bow, but plucked the strings instead like they were stitches that needed tearing out. I had been taught from movies and television that most rich people were unhappy, that discontent is a by-product of successful economics, and Michelle played the violin as if this were true. I was jealous of everyone in the band because they could play instruments and demand such thorough attention without even singing words.

The kids on the couches and against the painted brick wall and across the floor watched the band as if a greater distance separated everyone and as if the people up there were not their friends. They watched the band like you'd watch theatre. The people looked familiar but played unfamiliar characters, everything was a clue to something later, and the story only ended when the lights came on. Until then you sat obediently, respectfully, in the dark. I stood bewildered. Music without words was meant for orchestras and jazz clubs and movie soundtracks and had no place in rock, no place in basements packed with teenagers.

My friend Brian, who was drunk, stood next to me. He cupped his right hand over his mouth and spoke with the volume of a stage whisper: "I'm bored." The liquor floated like a thick jungle mist off his tongue. I wondered where he got the rum

and if it was cheap rum or expensive, middle-shelf rum with a name I'd heard in commercials. Did he mix it with pop and ice in a real glass or in red plastic cups like we used to on New Year's Eve or take shots of it in his bedroom or did he drink part of a two-liter cola then fill the bottle back up with booze and swirl it around and drink in the passenger seat of his red Volkswagen parked right outside? I leaned my head toward him. "I'm bored too." It became acceptable to acknowledge this once Brian did, since I believed he knew more about music than I did, and more about alcohol and girls too. And sports, drugs, politics, movies, television, the high school social spectrum, canonical literature, investment banking, and the state of Arizona. He had been the lead singer for another band Andy used to play in, a rock band where people stood up and moved some when the music got going and people learned the words. "Let's go," he said. "We've stayed for enough." I nodded in the dark and we stepped over legs and shoulders toward the staircase.

Once, Brian and Andy's rock band played a gig in Iowa City at the same bar where we went to see our favorite bands play. Brian and Andy were opening for two bands on a real record label with merchandise people and buses and it was a big deal. Only a few of our friends showed up for their set but still, it was *the* place where musicians went to play tiny shows before exploding. I thought their band would explode and I wondered if Brian ever got down about the way it went instead.

As we fumbled up the stairs a woman watching through the gap looked back at us and smiled with especially neat white teeth. We stopped. Andy's mother put one hand on each of our shoulders in turn and whispered an actual whisper, "Thanks so much for coming, boys. Andy really appreciates you guys supporting him." She nodded and smiled extra genuinely for a second after she said it.



"It's really good," I said. "He's really talented." Brian nodded and kept his jungle mouth closed.

"Have a good night, boys," she said and we rushed up the stairs. A few others trailed behind us, following our escape. I wanted awfully to go back and sit in the front and make sure both Andy and his mother saw me sitting in the front paying good, appropriate attention, being a really good friend. That's what a really good friend would do, but the air outside was energizing, the dark was not claustrophobic—nothing felt like theatre.

Compact cars, old-model Grand Prixes, Grand Ams, and a few pick-up trucks lined both sides of the street, bumpers nearly touching. "It sounds like a soundtrack to some epic battle scene," I said, walking toward my car and feeling apologetic. "Really understated at first, then getting bigger and really aggressive and intense." I imagined elves and demons with swords and axes, then playing along with it, the Battlefield Never Loses Parts I, II, and III.

"It sounds like background noise," Brian said. I knew these statements were the same in an important way but different in another.

The friends who followed us started interrogating each other about what to do now. It was presumed that every individual hoarded a supply of liquor or an of-age supplier of liquor or a place to drink it. It was easier to leave a place than to think of somewhere better. We could still hear the guitars and drums from the basement. The brick and earth filtered out their subtleties and *then*, if ever, it was strictly noise. The kids still sat down there watching. I imagined them in the dark, eyes glazed over from the constancy and singularity of what they saw. It seemed a little cultish.

Our friend Kolin, who was also drunk but more impatient about it, kept demanding progress. "Let's do something already. Come on come on come on come on." His hands plummeted into his pockets and he wandered around the black lawn, hopping straight up and down when he thought we forgot about him. "Come on come on." Kolin drove drunk more than most of us because his car had a stick shift and few of us could do it for him. He also drove drunk from a certain Newtonian principle: If he put the party in motion, it'd have to keep going until something more difficult

opposed him. Brian drove drunk a lot too, but only because he was fearless. I drove drunk as a logical way to deny doing so: *I don't drive drunk. I am driving. Therefore, I am not drunk.* That night I was cold sober and anxious and feeling bad about leaving in the first place. Consequently, everything seemed urgent. We broke an ancient trust. We left the cult before the rituals were over, before Part III ended, even if it sounded the same as the rest and even if it uncomfortably lacked a foreground. The longer we remained the clearer it was that these were not good reasons to walk away.

Kolin threatened to drive if we didn't get moving. I offered to drive instead, if there was a place to go, and Brian ran one index finger into the air and said, "To my house!" and walked off to his Volkswagen and Kolin ran ahead, jumped in the passenger seat, and they were off. I followed in my car alone. The street lit up with headlights scooting away from the curb, three-pointing back the way they came and squealing down the block.

EARLIER THAT YEAR, THE SAME BUNCH of us had been up late at the city park, sober and miserable about it. Sunset Park lay alongside the town's main drag and was mostly junk swing sets and pavilions crammed with rotted picnic tables, except for one labyrinth of clean wood paneling, spiraling plastic slides, rope bridges, and floors of shredded tar. The city had poured money into one good playground, something the people in town could be proud of and bring their kids to on Sundays or summers. They called it the New Dawn at Sunset. Our town was always desperately demanding its liveliness. The playground saw more traffic after dark, when it was officially closed and the young people started to roam.

Kolin swung back and forth on the zip-line. I watched him do tricks and make long jumps into the tar. Andy was walking along the playground's edge by himself looking serious. Michelle and Brian stood by the tire swings. They looked serious too. It didn't register at first but after Kolin's stunts became repetitive I left him and approached Michelle who I realized was crying. She held both hands against her cheeks to cover her sniffles and croaking speech. Her curly blonde hair was especially uncontrolled,

bunching up on top of her head. Michelle always looked more adult than anyone. She acted very adult and mannerly and knew which glasses were meant for which wines. Sobbing after midnight, she looked especially old, like more had happened that day than had ever happened in one day ever before. She was wrecked about something. I didn't ask about it right away because I was scared of people when they were serious.

"Andy can be like that," said Brian in a consoling voice. "He just gets that way."

She sobbed harder. "You can't even hear my track in the song. I spent so long recording my parts." She sniffled. "Then we start mixing and he says, 'Less violin, less violin, less violin,' and by the time he keeps turning it down and I'm not even there anymore, why should I even be around?"

"He's pretty controlling. He thinks it's his thing, not anyone else's." Brian's way of consoling was to be especially agreeable and summarizing.

"The guitars are plenty loud. The guitar and drums, that's all you can fucking hear," Michelle said, calming some. She swore eloquently without dropping the g at the end. "And keys. You can hear keys. He mixes everything else out of the song." Brian shook his head. Andy walked along the play area's wood threshold, one foot before the other like a kid on train tracks. Before, I thought he looked lonely up there. Now that I knew he'd hurt someone and further knew that *he* knew he'd hurt someone, I thought he looked not exactly apologetic, but sorrowfully aware that he'd hurt someone and decidedly unable to apologize. Up on the ledge, he walked away from us. Andy's shape was skinny, nearly skeletal. The veins in his arms were always visible, but not like in athletes where the sheer muscle mass forces them to surface. His were like the arms of elderly people: no thickness or depth for the blood to hide. Furthermore, he was conspicuously pale in the daylight, like he never experienced brightness and didn't belong in it. Altogether, he didn't seem to lack nourishment, but instead always seemed to be crawling out of a dark and sleepless project. He seemed always at the edge of himself.

I wanted to see his face. I wanted to confirm what I believed was true about him, but couldn't see him now. His hands were in his pockets. His head sort of floated on his

shoulders, toward the stars then the wooden ledge at his feet then the black skyline. He was up there because he could not change his mind about the recording, could not apologize for not changing his mind, but could not argue any further about what happened. He was up there showing us this, moving around in a shadowy blackness, not in any excruciating limbo himself but having knowingly created one for someone he cared about. Now, he was just waiting. Either Michelle would come around or things would not be the same anymore. She and Brian were deciding which way it'd be.

"I'm not even there," Michelle said again. I wanted to help. I wanted to tilt things in the direction of Michelle coming around, but felt completely deficient to the conversation. I didn't know my friends were making a CD. I didn't know where they accomplished this or who engineered it or what the music even sounded like. I knew they were called The God Creators, but didn't know there was a violin. I didn't know what kind of bands used violins. I didn't know anything. I, too, felt like the absolute farthest point from the center of a universe that everyone else comfortably inhabited.

"When we were playing together," Brian said, "he wanted me to get voice lessons. He said I sang out of tune and if we wanted to get real about the band, I'd need lessons. 'Come on, it sounds fine,' I'd say. It did." He paused and returned to the point. "And you're really fuckin' talented. He'll criticize anyone somehow. Michelle, the violin is my favorite part of The God Creators."

"Oh, thanks, Brian." She lightened up, purposefully met his eyes, and they had something now together. They had something very solid and infallible.

I spoke up and agreed that Michelle was talented, just to say something. She sat down in the tire swing and Brian started to push her. We spent more time on the playground in the dark. Everyone did, fooling around on the monkey bars and slides. Bridges made of wooden planks connected with heavy chains clattered as the momentum carried us down them and up again. Kolin showed his zip-line tricks to everyone, as he'd taken some time to rehearse them. They all had grandiose titles and running starts. We let ourselves laugh.

I could not figure out which path the night had taken because it had taken both:



IMAGE FROM ISSUE 12 INTERIOR
BY ARTURO ERNESTO ROMO-SANTILLANO

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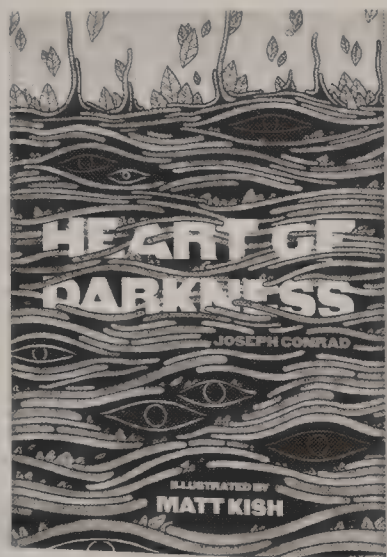
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A striking hardcover edition with vibrant, four-color illustrations accompanying every page of Conrad's classic text. Kish's rich, imaginative drawings and paintings serve to illuminate Marlow's journey into the heart of the Congo, and into the depths of the human soul.

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Michelle had come around, and also things would not be the same anymore. Music, I decided, must be a torturous thing for those who lived closest to it.

THE ONLY TIME I EVER DRANK LIQUOR IN Michelle's house we were both home from college, she from a Catholic women's college in Indiana and I from the public university in Iowa City. Late at night we talked about religion at her kitchen table, which was finished wood shining under an overhead light. I didn't really know what Catholics believed, only that sometimes they were very serious about it. I asked her if it was offensive for Atheists to go into a church and practice the rituals if just for the sake of being with their families. Was it insulting to seriously religious people if someone sat in the pews and sang from the hymnals without ever meaning it.

Her fingertips still touched the wine glass she had drunk from, a purple residue still within the cup, when she formed her answer. "No, it's not offensive. So long as a person is respectful. Certain ceremonies they shouldn't participate in," she said, like she was recalling the answer from a lesson, "but everyone's level of involvement is different. So long as they are respectful." It surprised me to need forgiveness in this, but I felt relieved when she provided it.

AFTER THE GOD CREATORS FINISHED their set in the basement and everyone congratulated them for how complex it was, they found their way to Brian's house. We had already gotten plenty drunk and forgotten about the show, like it had been another distant evening we were already positioned well to remember. The living room was bright and planetary, a thousand things moving at once: people, sounds, fast images. I saw Michelle arrive wearing a cream-colored scarf because it was chilly and she was proper and fashionable. Andy was there and some others in the band who smiled cordially and shook hands with people as they entered. It was certainly clear by the state of things that we had not stayed to watch them and had come here instead, though I could not read disappointment into their faces.

They didn't drink, just socialized. They shook hands, thanked people, and were

rapidly polite. I avoided them. And I drank. I drank until I threw up in the bathroom and I kept throwing up till my throat burned and I tasted acid all along the roof of my mouth and stuffing my nostrils. I drove home not long after.

ANDY, BRIAN, AND KOLIN'S BAND, BEFORE The God Creators, did covers of the Hives, Blink-182, and demoed some original songs on a CD they passed around to people at school. Brian learned some bass lines just for the purpose of this band and sang half the songs. Kolin played power chords on guitar and sang the other half. Andy played drums because someone had to play drums and Andy could play anything. They practiced in Andy's basement and the cover of their demo was a grainy image of them there: mid-song, T-shirts and jeans, daylight pouring in the near-ceiling windows, instrument cords snaking across the tan carpet, tube amplifiers against the wall, the drum kit, the guys. No one acknowledged the camera. No one posed or even looked particularly cool, so the picture didn't feel like a picture; it felt like a real human moment recorded at eye level into your memory. Like you were standing there, like you were watching, like they acknowledged you there too, and eventually you remember being there. You were there all along. The room smelled like standing water. You felt out of the group but so did everyone. You were comforted by the discontent that you sensed: Andy was too obsessive, Brian uninterested in improving, and Kolin didn't care in a lot of ways; he'd eventually wander drunkenly away from the whole thing. They all recognized these qualities in each other and felt alienated by them. Their alienation from each other soothed your own for awhile. It felt verifying. It gave you rights. But then it seemed worrisome. It seemed stressful and disturbing. It made your forehead glisten with sweat in the cold basement as you stood snapping pictures with your memory. If everyone felt like the outside and no one felt like the center, then the center was not real and the group that all of you felt outside of was not real, and that left you scattered and tired and staring in different directions of an already narrow room. □

The reviews in this issue continue the look at memoirs, but these memoirs differ in focus and revelations. As with most memoirs, the relationships surrounding the authors are explored as shown because both begin with allegories and cultural stories about the journey a child's spirit takes when preparing to be born. While these beginnings emphasize the importance of family in these books, though, the generic nature of the stories foreshadows the placement of the specific stories in a larger identity. Honesty and self-disclosure shape the memoirs' very confessional tone and allows both memoirs to speak of insights that relate beyond the authors' personal journeys.

Motherhood Exaggerated by Judith Hannan, CavanKerry Press, 2012. 300p, softcover, \$21.00 • In her memoir, Judith Hannan recounts the challenges experienced when a parent has a child with a life-threatening illness. She brings a very personal view to the few years just before, during, and after her eight-year-old daughter Nadia's battle with cancer, and it is that perspective that most illustrates how motherhood—and often fatherhood—becomes exaggerated beyond the normal boundaries. While numerous other relationships interweave through the book—Hannan's relationship with her mother and siblings, the various dynamics of parenting with her husband John, and the different ways in which she connects and responds to her other two children Frannie and Nadia's twin brother Max—it is the relationship specifically between Hannan and her own anger, frustration, and uncertainties as she cares for Nadia at the center of the book. While Nadia's trials are certainly the focus, this book shows the subtle way caring becomes caretaking and maternal responses override personal choices.

Hannan's almost myopic obsession with her own successes and failures at caring captures the feeling of isolation that comes with this immersion. The references to the other people in Hannan's life are tangential to her own struggle with personal questions of how and what and why. The isolation counters the outside expectation she would rely on her husband and her children and extended family for respite, and while she mentions those

times she does so, the narrative's center on the need to look inward almost more than anywhere else becomes the most honest and important confession of the book. It is a response others who have been in this situation, myself included, recognize and perhaps cringe at the familiarity.

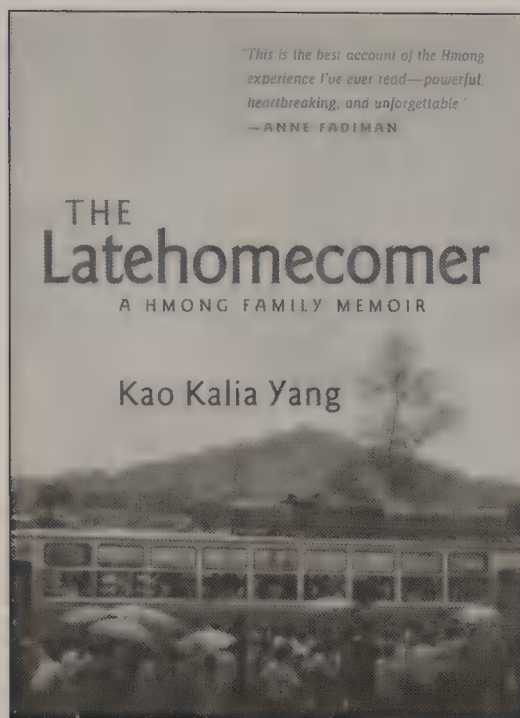
By the end of the book, when Nadia has grown beyond the immediate threat and settled into her life, we readers have come to both an understanding of and respect for Hannan's ability to make public that part of her co-dependent response of self-preservation in the face of such feelings of impotence and love for her child. Her openly honest and eloquent words speak of almost painful insight into the conflict between protecting and letting go that intensifies the maternal instinct found in all parents. It is an important personal memoir that captures a common scary and complicated reality, and it is well worth reading.

The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir by Kao Kalia Yang, Coffee House Press, 2008, reissued in 2010., 274p, paper \$16.95 • In *The Latehomecomer: a Hmong Family Memoir*, Kao Kalia Yang chronicles

Paeans

BRIEF BOOK REVIEWS

ANNE M. DROLET



the complex yet little known—in fact often ignored—history of the Hmong presence in China and Laos, of their role in the Vietnam War, and of their addition to the US story of immigration. The book begins with birth and ends with rebirth, as the epigraph retells a cultural allegory about babies choosing how and when to be born, and the epilogue describes the place of the Hmong people in the US. It is a story of traditions and respect as well as a story of adjustment and redefinition. Primarily the memoir focuses on Yang's grandmother, the matriarch of the family, and the importance of her strong will and love to maintain traditional values for both Yang and the family's welfare overall. But just as importantly, this is a beautiful memoir of the relationship between Yang and her father, a quiet man who challenges some of the central traditions with subtle choices, including his commitment to the women in his family for their personal identities and not just for their cultural roles. If Yang's grandmother epitomizes maintaining the traditional ways, her father epitomizes adapting for survival.

Yang tells this story, as with the rest of the memoir, with a simple voice, and there are places where the reader might wonder if the repetition of information or the alternating personal references between first and third person when speaking is just poor editing. But as the memoir continues, it became obvious that these places are the elements of an oral history, a written capturing of ways to sustain a people's history when the literary language has been lost.

The importance of Yang's writing of the orality of this family's history becomes most obvious when her grandmother dies. At the ceremony a Hmong funeral guide, customarily male, verbally retraces the steps of Yang's grandmother's journey back to Laos, returning her spirit to that traditional home. In contrast, although Yang has redefined the traditional guide's gender, in writing this memoir, becomes the storyteller who guides her family and her community back along their life journey to give her people's spirit a home. This book is more than a personal memoir but a discerning look into the immigrant, and specifically Hmong, story. □

As always in our spring issue, we are proud to honor Asian American Heritage Month, celebrated in the US in May. In this "episode" of *Synecdoche*, I review books by Ed Bok Lee, a Korean American, and Paisley Rekdal, a hapa whose ancestry is Chinese and Norwegian.

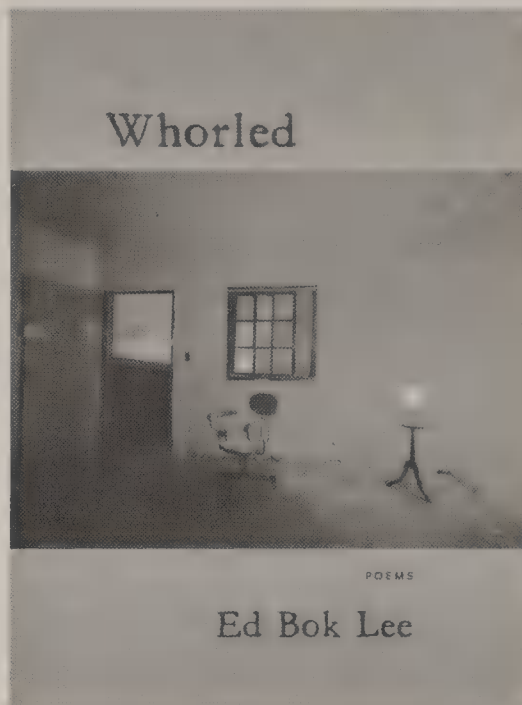
Whorled by Ed Bok Lee, Coffee House Press, 140p, 2011, paper \$16.00 •

In an interview about his poetry collection *Whorled*, Ed Bok Lee said that globalization, the book's "main issue," has a "conundrum" at its heart: "Power corrupts. But one who is afraid of corruption, is afraid of life." John F. Kennedy once wrote, "When power corrupts, poetry cleanses," and such cleansing is what Lee's poetry is about. Not that Lee's poems are beautiful in any traditional sense—they are hard-nosed and down-to-earth. "Thank you Bruce Lee," he writes, "for fucking / up my childhood like a cinderblock." About his family Lee writes, "Atop their dresser mirror / rested a 2 x 4 my father used / to scratch his back // and discipline us." Of immigration: "Sunah / had been a Korean prostitute, come to America by way of rape, / drugs, abandon." I am misrepresenting Lee, however; there is also much heart-tugging beauty in his work: "the moon is a harpsichord on fire, / revised by trees so green they're blue." Or: "Quietly kaleidoscopic; an oil lamp—lit lotus pond / in late spring dense with fireflies & plankton." To Lee—world-weary slam poet and bright-eyed poet on-the-road—it is what lies between these two extremes that saves. "Poetry is a sickness," he writes; you want to write about "the stars [as] tiny palpitating ancestor hearts / watching over us // and what you get on the page / is that car crash on Fourth and Broadway." Within the world's grotesqueness, though, lives inevitable grace; yes, the "car crash was fucked up, / but the way the rain fell to wash away the blood / . . . was gorgeous." Poetry cleanses, as JFK said, but its beauty hurts and that cleansing is full of pain. It's worth it, though, Lee tells us. The alternative, how "power corrupts," is something we just cannot let live.

Synecdoche

BRIEF BOOK REVIEWS

VINCE GOTERA



Animal Eye by Paisley Rekdal, Pittsburgh, 2012, 96p, paper \$15.95 • Paisley Rekdal's title *Animal Eye* suggests first, these poems look close at the/an animal by laying bare, in naturalist fashion, the eye; and second, Rekdal's speakers see with that eye. While this dichotomy is crude, it nonetheless holds true. Rekdal has an amazing knack for zeroing in and in on any subject by exploring all the flora and fauna and whatever that surround and inform it. At the same time, Rekdal imaginatively enters that subject to show us perspectives we ordinarily don't have. A girl describes her horse: "white flanks flecked green / with shit and the satin of his dander, / . . . all that blood just under the skin / and in the long, thick muscle of the neck." In the almost sexual vein of this language, the girl recalls "watching the slim bodies of teenagers / guide their geldings . . . as if they were one body." Then the point of view jumps to that girl as an adult addressing her lover: "your hand against my shoulder" like the girl's hand had rested on the horse's "back or shoulder," recalling "the one who

taught me disobedience": the horse that "was and was not human [and which] we must respect for itself." Again and again Rekdal does this double vision, plumbing animals and nature, our families (next to the French revolution and cancer), our social interactions (e.g., the tango). In short, our selves: "I must name you and me" (always gloriously). Read *Animal Eye*. It is glorious.

Mania Klepto: The Book of Eulene by Carolyne Wright, Turning Point Books, 2011, 106p, paper \$19.00 • The title of Carolyne Wright's *Mania Klepto* inverts the clinical compulsion *kleptomania*, stealing for its own sake rather than financial gain. Reading this book, one gets the feeling that Eulene, a super-detailed and developed character, has indeed stolen from/into Wright's real life. This is how Wright herself talks about her double: Eulene "shoved me away from my grad-student work station and began to wreak havoc upon the speakers" in my poems. Eulene "seemed determined to function as a sort of Doppelgänger-cum-Dr. Jekyll / Ms. Hyde figure upon whom I could project emotions I dared not attribute to myself." In fact, what little I know of Wright's life I find highlighted and fireworked in several poems. Be that as it may, I'd like to point out that Wright is definitely a poet's poet. Note her play with sound: "That bummer, / memory, building its nests in the drawers. / Let it burn into the beer-bleared eyes / averted when Eulene walks in. / Fears that roll the sleeping bags tighter / behind Venetian blinds. Bullies / who look for victims in the mirrors." Alliteration of *b/v*. Assonance of long *i*. And so on. Wright fills out Eulene's world with surrealistic plethora: a "sea squid on a hat rack . . . knick-knack shelves [with] fusty old victrolas, / lace antimacassars jostling / each other" or in Bangladesh, "a heap of used banana plates / glorified with a nimbus of fruit flies," etc. This book is a profound exploration of our times, our Zeitgeist, our social and political tics, and . . . it's fun. Pick it up. You won't be disappointed. *Note: a poem by Wright appears in this issue on p 31.* □

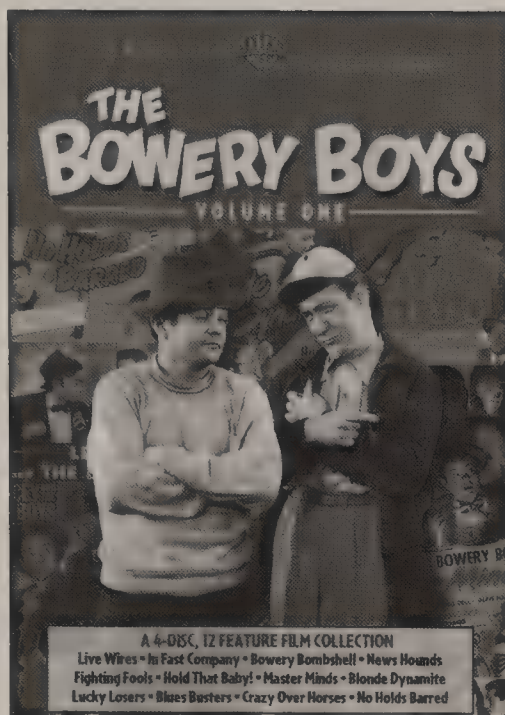
The Bowery Boys: Volume One (1946–52), Warner Brothers Archive 2012, 13 hours, \$47.99 • In honor of my father who passed away in April of 2012, I decided to revisit this series, a favorite of his as a kid. These twelve episodes of idealized realism personify the grit and grime of the city slums. Here the gang, a bunch of arrested adolescents, doesn't carry switchblades or zip guns, but enjoy down time at Louie's Sweet Shop. And sweet, not saccharine, is the right moniker for this series. The Boys are kind-hearted and funny. Each film, anchored by Leo Gorcey (Slip Mahoney) and Huntz Hall (Satch) relies on a series of five or six moves and restores order to a crumpled kingdom. Gorcey, strutting like a Cagney pug, is the leader and isn't quite as smart as he thinks he is. His language is full of engaging malapropisms: "He can't extinguish right from wrong"; "time immaterial"; "Let me regurgitate"; "I depreciate that"; "I'll sue them for some salt and batteries"; and "he's a great public benefrature." Slip's words, layered with nuanced mayhem, belie his tough East-Side background. Satch, the comic figure, is a fey man-child, whose uncontrollable appetites get the gang in trouble. Several episodes showcase Satch attaining momentary superhuman powers (clairvoyance, Sinatra-esque singing panache, or wrestling prowess). But the best episodes skate at the edges of real problems such as racketeering (*News Hounds*) and fight-fixing (*Fighting Fools*). So what did my father, a Toronto kid from the streets of Cabbagetown, like about this show? The big-city camaraderie and sense of community. Natch.

42: *The Jackie Robinson Story* (2012), Warner Brothers 2013, 128 mins, \$28.98 • At the request of general manager Branch Rickey (Harrison Ford) Robinson bottles his own anger, turning the other cheek in the face of vile epithets as he crosses baseball's "color line." After a series of taunts hurled by Phillies Manager Ben Chapman, Robinson disappears down a darkened hallway and shatters his bat against cement

Crosscuts

BRIEF DVD REVIEWS

GRANT TRACEY



walls. Chadwick Boseman (Robinson) captures all of the brooding intensity and struggles of the troubled star and how the events of 1946–47 weighed on his psyche. The period detail is exquisite and there are many re-captured historical moments, including the classic hug at first base between Pee Wee Reese and Robinson at Crosley Field in Cincinnati. But my favorite reveal occurs late in the film when Rickey tells Robinson why he decided to break baseball's "gentleman's agreement." Poignant.

Simon and Laura (1955), VCI 2011, 91 mins, \$19.99 • Fun English comedy with Peter Finch and Kay Kendall as the Fosters, a bickering couple whose marriage is falling apart; in order to make their financial ends meet they commit to a daily serialized television show about their lives for the BBC. Of course, initially, all of their marital quarrels are muted and the Fosters come across as a prequel to the Bradys! The film is full of clever zingers and Kendall is wonderful in deflating her husband's ego by re-

peatedly suggesting that he's a ham. The pace is quick, the humor subtle, and the film ultimately questions the alleged authenticity of documentary realism. A real curio.

A Portrait of James Dean: Joshua Tree, 1951 (2012), WolfeVideo 2013, 93mins, \$24.95 • Taking its lead from William Bast's memoir *Surviving James Dean*, writer/director Michael Mishory presents James Dean not as a bisexual (as is often presented), but as a homosexual who occasionally has sex with women. This gay-themed film is haunting, evocative, and honestly explores Dean's complicated sexuality and presents an intimate portrait of a man on the cusp of stardom. James Preston (Dean) bravely portrays an actor interested in knowing who he is and negotiating a love affair with a man (no doubt Bast but listed in the credits as "The Roommate" [Dan Glenn]). Decadent poolside living with radio guru Roger isn't for Dean; he quests for authenticity and answers of the soul. Michael Marius Pessah's black-and-white photography creates a stunning world, presenting a mythic Dean about to rise like Phoenix from the gray ashes.

Badlands (1973), Criterion 2013, 94 mins, \$29.95 • Strange and sublime Terrence Malick film that has an odd French New Wave-meets-film noir tone (think Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* blended with Nicholas Ray's *They Live By Night*). There are several images of beautiful stillness, landscapes stretching before us with pure poetic beauty, counterpointed with off-putting violence and a voiceover from the unreliable Holly Sargis (Sissy Spacek) that deconstruct that stillness. Holly is trapped in the Hollywood fan magazines that she devours, presenting us with a fractured fairytale that eventually winds up being about love gone wrong. Martin Sheen (Kit Carruthers) is eerie as a James Dean look-a-like who smiles and charms us but is full of sociopathic malice. He's a thinning ice cube: surface cool, but nothing underneath. □

Contributors

RACHEL ADAMS lives in Washington, DC, where she is the editor at a nonprofit advocacy association. Her first poetry collection, *What Is Heard*, was published in July 2013 by Red Bird Press.

WESLEY ALLSBROOK attended the Rhode Island School of Design and lives in Brooklyn, spending her days illustrating magazines, books, and graphic novels.

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ROY BENTLEY's books include *Boy in a Boat*, *Any One Man*, and *The Trouble with a Short Horse in Montana*. *Starlight Taxi*, his latest, won the 2012 Blue Lynx Prize in Poetry and will appear later this year.

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Originally from Oklahoma, A. É. COLEMAN is a former US Navy Signalman. He has cats, plays the bagpipes, and aspires to continue his postgraduate studies in Ireland.

DEJA EARLEY has published poems, essays, and stories in journals like *Utne Reader*, *Arts and Letters*, and *Diagram*. She lives in the Boston area and blogs at dejavuearley.blogspot.com.

MORGAN EKLUND is a 2013 Emerging Artist Award recipient from the Kentucky Arts Council. Her work has appeared in *Whiskey Island*, *ABZ*, *The Peacock's Feet* and *Dark Sky Magazine*.

JESS FINK is an illustrator and graphic novelist. She is the author of *We Can Fix it*, a Time Travel Memoir and *Chester 5000 xyv* (Top Shelf). Her work can also be found online at JessFink.com.

REBECCA FOUST's books include *God, Seed* (Foreword Book of the Year Award) and *All That Gorgeous Pitiless Song* (Many Mountains Moving Book Prize). Poems are forthcoming in *Cincinnati Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Narrative*, *Sewanee*, and *Zyzzyva*.

TRACY FUAD was born and raised in Minnesota. She currently teaches science and slam poetry to seventh graders in Coney Island, New York.

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AMY GREACEN's collection *A Modern Herbal* is forthcoming from Measure Press in January 2014. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

H. L. HIX's most recent poetry collection is a "selected poems" called *First Fire, Then Birds*, published in 2010 by Etruscan Press. He was judge of this year's James Hearst Poetry Prize. His website is www.hlhix.com.

EMILY HOCKADAY's first chapbook, *Starting A Life*, is available through Finishing Line Press. Her poems have appeared in *Pear Noir!*, *The West Wind Review*, *The Chaffey Review*, *Plainspoke*, and *Go Places*.

B. J. HOLLARS is the author of two nonfiction books, *Thirteen Loops* and *Opening the Doors*. He teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

TOM HOLMES is the editor of *Redactions: Poetry, Poetics, & Prose* and the author of six collections of poetry. His writings about wine, poetry book reviews, and poetry can be found in his blog, *The Line Break*, at thelinebreak.wordpress.com.

MICHAEL DERRICK HUDSON's poems have appeared in *Georgia Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *North American Review*, and *New Letters*. He won the *River Styx International Poetry Contest*, the *Madison Review's* Phyllis Smart Young Prize, and the *New Ohio Review* Prize.

SUSAN KELLY-DEWITT is the author of *The Fortunate Islands* (Marick Press). For more information visit her website at www.susankelly-dewitt.com.

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YAN LIN was born in Shanghai and currently lives in Boston. Several poems are forthcoming from *Untucked Magazine*.

PHILIP MARTIN is a critic and columnist for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*; author of *The Shortstop's Son* and *The Artificial Southerner* and curator of *Blood, Dirt & Angels* (www.blooddirtangels.com).

JENNIFER MILITELLO is the author of *Body Thesaurus* (Tupelo Press, 2013); *Flinch of Song*, winner of the Tupelo Press First Book Award; and the chapbook *Anchor Chain, Open Sail*.

MỘNG-LAN, multidisciplinary poet/writer (author of six books/chapbooks), painter, photographer, dancer of Argentine tango/singer, and educator, left Vietnam on the last day of the evacuation of Saigon. Visit: www.monglan.com.

STEVEN MOORE is originally from Southeast Iowa. Currently, he lives and works in San Francisco.

RACHEL MORGAN is co-editor of *Fire Under the Moon: An Anthology of Contemporary Slovene Poetry*. Her poems have appeared in *Fence*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Pisgah Review*, and *Volt*.

ERIN MURPHY is the author of five books of poetry, most recently *Distant Glitter* (Word Poetry, 2013). She is associate professor of English and creative writing at Penn State Altoona. Website: www.erin-murphy.com.

JACOB NEWBERRY won the 2012 *Ploughshares* Emerging Writer's Contest in Nonfiction. His nonfiction, fiction, and poetry have been published or are forthcoming in *Granta*, *Ploughshares*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Southwest Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Colorado Review*, *Best New Poets 2011*, and *Out Magazine*.

ANDREW PAYTON is an Master of Fine Arts candidate at Iowa State University. His prose and poetry is featured in *The Greensboro Review*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Fourth River*, and *Notre Dame Review*.

Midwest transplant freelance artist JARED ROGNESS, now settled into California's Central Valley, is currently working on creator-owned comics and editorial art.

HEATHER SELLERS is the author of two volumes of poetry: *Drinking Girls and Their Dresses* and *The Boys I Borrow*, as well as a memoir, *You Don't Look Like Anyone I Know*.

MICHAEL SPENCE has driven Seattle area public-transit buses for twenty-nine years. His work is forthcoming in *The Hudson Review* and *Tampa Review*. His latest book is *Crush Depth*.

MATTHEW J. SPIRENG's books are *What Focus Is* and *Out of Body*, which won the 2004 Bluestem Poetry Award. His chapbooks: *Clear Cut*, *Young Farmer*, *Encounters*, *Inspiration Point*, and *Just This*.

ALISON SWAN's poems and essays have appeared in many publications, including two chapbooks. Her book, *Fresh Water: Women Writing on the Great Lakes*, is a Library of Michigan Notable Book. She teaches at Western Michigan University.

KYOKO UCHIDA's poetry collection, *Elsewhere*, was published by Texas Tech University Press in 2012. Her work has appeared in *The Georgia Review*, *Manoa*, *Prairie Schooner*, and other journals.

MARK WAGENAAR—Master of Fine Arts, University of Virginia—is this year's winner of the James Wright Poetry Prize. His debut collection, *Voodoo Inverso*, won the 2012 Pollak Prize. Recent poems in *Triquarterly*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, and *32 Poems*.

HOLLY WOODWARD is a writer and artist. Last spring, Holly won the Rachel Wetzsteon Prize at the 92nd Street Y in New York. She combines her painting, calligraphy, poems and hand-marbled papers into books.

JOANNA THOMPSON YEZEK's poetry has been published in *Midwestern Gothic* and, interestingly, the walls of the London Underground. Read her blog at: InadvertentVerse.tumblr.com.

RICK VANDERWALL is a faculty member at the University of Northern Iowa Department of Languages and Literatures. He works with the Folger Shakespeare library on Shakespeare Education initiatives.

JONATHAN WEI's work has been performed at the Library of Congress and the Maryland Center for the Performing Arts, and appeared in the *Iowa Review*, *Village Voice*, and *Glimmer Train*.

CAROLYNE WRIGHT's most recent book is *Mania Klepto: the Book of Eulene*, reviewed in this issue. Other recent poems appear in *The Best American Poetry* and the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*.

FROM THE EDITORS / continued from page 2

with this issue. We tender our heartfelt thanks to the NEA!

As we customarily do in the Spring issue, we celebrate Asian American Heritage Month. The writers of Asian American ancestry and heritage in this issue are Mộng-Lan, Yan Lin, and Kyoko Uchida, all poets. Anne M. Drolet, our Reviews Editor, reviews a memoir by Hmong writer Kao Kalia Yang in her omnibus review article Paeans. And Vince Gotera reviews poetry books by Asian American poets Ed Bok Lee and Paisley Rekdal.

We typically celebrate different heritage months and literary celebration months of the US in various issues. In our Winter issue (which covers January, February and March), we honor Black History Month (February) and Women's History Month (March). In our Spring issue (April, May, and June), we celebrate National Poetry Month (April in the US and also in several other countries) and Asian American Heritage Month, celebrated in May in the US. In our third issue of each year, the Summer issue (July, August, and September) we

honor Hispanic Heritage Month (celebrated from 15 September to 15 October). And in our final number of the volume year, the Fall issue, we honor Native American Heritage Month. These celebrations mean we publish works and review books by people of those different groups. The issues are never wholly devoted to these groups, however, since we strive to publish as many writers as we can, of whatever flavor.

In the Spring issue, we also publish the first, second, and third place winners, alongside the honorable mentions and finalists of our James Hearst Poetry Prize. This year we are glad to publish also a poem by this year's Hearst judge, H. L. Hix. His poem is in a poetic form called a glose.

Along with celebrating different heritage months, we have several ongoing departments: Crosscuts, which reviews recently released classic films, indie cinema, and TV series; Paeans, which reviews prose books; Synecdoche, which reviews poetry collections and anthologies. In anticipation of our 200th birthday in 2015, our Past Perfect department has contemporary experts commenting on past articles in the NAR.

Hope you enjoy this word machine!

—VG & GT

PAST PERFECT

What's New at the Folger Library

RICK VANDERWALL

"Will Shakespeare in Washington"

Montrose J. Moses

The Folger Library, according to the terms of its donation, and under the trusteeship of Amherst College, Mr. Folger's alma mater, "is given for the benefit not only of the college but of the country."

... In profoundly good taste, the Folger Memorial Library perpetuates Shakespeare treasures for the nation. At Mr. Folger's funeral, the Rev. Dr. Cadman reported him as once saying: "I did think of placing the Shakespeare Library at Stratford near the bones of the great man himself, but I finally concluded I would give it to Washington, for I am an American" . . . The Prince of Wales was a little more to the point. He said: "The American people share with us the great treasury of our language and of all the noble works which that language has inspired" . . . That is the spirit, I believe, in which it was bestowed upon the nation. There is an international aspect to the gift, an interchange of common ownership. For years our scholars have had to go to England to conduct their researches; now the English will have to come to us also in this one channel of study. It is a reciprocal fellowship. . . .

The consequence is that the Folger Memorial Library has association volumes that have been in the hands of Burns, Coleridge, Gray, Garrick Johnson, Scott, Shelley, Southey, C. Bronte, George Eliot, Lamb, Pater, Browning, Lowell, Hawthorne, Ruskin; and from the past stage has been gathered a goodly array of prompt copies. . . .

These aspects of particularity confront every student of Shakespeare. When one looks through the stupendous works of Sir E. K. Chambers, and Dr. Felix Schelling, one realizes the extent to which scholarship can go when sources are made available for use.

From the *North American Review*, August 1932, Volume 234, Issue 2, pp. 139-148.

SEVENTY YEARS AGO, IN HIS ARTICLE FOR the NAR "Will Shakespeare in Washington," Montrose Moses presented a multifaceted view not only of the newly erected Folger Shakespeare Library but also of Shakespeare scholarship of the era. Moses, a well-known editor of literary collections, understood the value of the huge amount of research and critical interpretation that was connected with the plays of Shakespeare.

That research continues with a surprising amount of new information about Shakespeare coming to light since the founding of the Folger Library in 1932. An online search of publishing related to Shakespeare just between 2010 and 2012 brings up over 380 items published worldwide. Nonetheless, the Folger Library also serves for scholarship beyond Shakespeare studies, since as little as one quarter of the research done is Shakespeare related, with many scholars doing research of other areas of the Early Modern period including philosophy, religion, and music.

What has changed at the Folger? Shakespeare has gone digital with texts in electronic format. The Folger offers a continually growing number of primary sources online, including the Folger editions used in American classrooms since the 1950s. Thanks to the work of Dr. Robert Young and the Folger Library Education Department, teachers have web based access to large collections of source material including lesson plans, Making the Scene, a blog about education related topics; and informational webinars.

Along with this access to source material, the visionary Teaching Shakespeare Institute (TSI) begun at the Folger Library in 1984 also has had a tremendous impact across the country in highlighting the value of "performance based teaching" when closely engaging students with the text of

Shakespeare. With the Folger's support, Dr. Peggy O'Brien and an army of committed TSI trained teachers have brought joy back to the study of Shakespeare to many American schools. The resulting Shakespeare Set Free texts are a common fixture in professional libraries of many English teachers and schools. All of these changes have had an impact on the teaching of Shakespeare throughout the nation.

Along with the scholarly and pedagogical offerings, the Folger Library is now and has in the past been known for innovative performances of plays, music and poetry. During the first forty years of its existence the Folger Library offered no regular production of the plays, but starting in the 1970s, various performances became a regular offering. Currently the performance season at the Folger includes three productions of Shakespearean and other Renaissance plays. Besides the entertainment factor, these plays serve a pedagogical use; the DVD distribution of the acclaimed 2008 Aaron Posner production of *Macbeth* in many language arts classrooms confirms not only the scholarly value of the production but its ability to engage the toughest of all audiences: teens. Additionally the well regarded Folger Consort offers performance of music from the 12th to 18th centuries. Poetry readings have also been a regular event at the Folger for the past forty years. Poets reading on the Folger stage, according to the Folger website, have included Gwendolyn Brooks, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and James Dickey.

Where will the library be in the next 80 years? While it is hard to predict, it is clear that the Folger Library will be leading the way in scholarship, pedagogy, and performance. One thing I hope never changes is that a copy of the First Folio of Shakespeare is always on display. That alone is worth a visit. □

PAST PERFECT showcases today's experts on notable items from the NAR's almost 200 years of back pages. The item excerpted at left may be read in full in the JSTOR archives at the address <<http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublication?journalCode=nortamerrev>>.

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We like stories that start quickly and have a strong narrative arc. Poems that are passionate about subject, language, and image are welcome, whether they are traditional or experimental, whether in formal or free verse (closed or open form). Nonfiction should combine art and fact with the finest writing.

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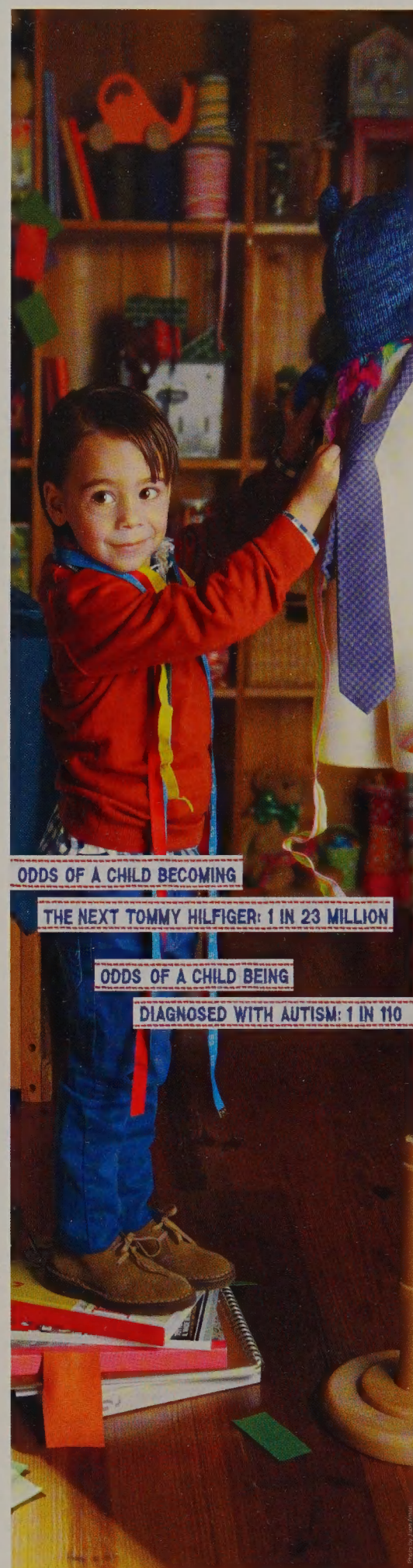
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No big smiles or other joyful expressions by 6 months	No babbling by 12 months	No words by 16 months
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Academy of American Poets National Poetry Month April 2013



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